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EDITORIAL

25 years in print! A water-mark. I am typing this on a lap-top, with a nifty ultra-clear flat-screen. When I first started this magazine in 1979, electric typewriters were the standard, personal computers still a glint in the eyes of their creators, and desk-top publishing just a pipe-dream. It was groovy and more. 25 years later, we've seen and learned a lot. A quarter of a century later, the world has transformed yet, somehow remained the same. The global village spins at the speed of light, but war, strife and poverty remain constants. Big business continues to consolidate. Governments compete. Artists strive to be seen and heard. That's where *Rampike* comes in. Offering a forum for 25 years. A lighthouse. A land-mark. Our first issue featured the topic of "erosion." Back then, I shrewdly figured it always begins with the ending, and so chose erosion as the starting point. Looking back, I congratulate my youthful self for that foresight. A life of carborundum. *Rampike*, the skeleton of a tree, ravaged by lightning or forest-fire. A sole finger pointing skyward. The seedlings of the lodge-pole pine are automatically released when surrounding temperatures reach the burning point – death/rebirth. The cycle continues. We've lost many fellow travelers along the way, but picked up many others. Still, enduring, passing the next highway post, I send thanks to all! Thanks to all the artists and writers who filled these pages over the years, thanks to the editors (especially, Jim and James and Carole), thanks to our international cadre of contributors at large, thanks to the art councils (especially the Canada Council for the Arts), special thanks to you, our readers, and thanks to the great creator, for it all. We couldn't have done it without you. It's been a thrill, meeting so many artists and writers from around the world, seeing and experiencing so many wonders. And now, a score and five years later, a blip on the odometer, and we're off on another spin through the village. In this issue, we offer a superb selection of talent. We are delighted to include old friends and new. Interviews, poetry, fiction, reviews, and graphics, by some of the finest artists in the world. We hope that you'll enjoy these, be stimulated, maybe astonished -- we hope you'll come back for more, tell your friends, pass it on – we hope that somehow all of this has made a small difference in global consciousness – and we thank one all for 25 years of stalwart support! – Karl Jirgens (Editor).

alpha and omega

Was made up mainly of printed questions, to examine his understanding of the word roots, as well as his knowledge of the alphabet. The first alphabet was the Greek alphabet, and the second was the Latin alphabet. The third was the Arabic alphabet, and the fourth was the Hebrew alphabet. The fifth was the Chinese alphabet, and the sixth was the Japanese alphabet. The seventh was the Korean alphabet, and the eighth was the Vietnamese alphabet. The ninth was the Thai alphabet, and the tenth was the Burmese alphabet. The eleventh was the Khmer alphabet, and the twelfth was the Lao alphabet. The thirteenth was the Tibetan alphabet, and the fourteenth was the Mongolian alphabet. The fifteenth was the Uighur alphabet, and the sixteenth was the Kazakh alphabet. The seventeenth was the Kyrgyz alphabet, and the eighteenth was the Uzbek alphabet. The nineteenth was the Tajik alphabet, and the twentieth was the Russian alphabet. The twenty-first was the Ukrainian alphabet, and the twenty-second was the Belarusian alphabet. The twenty-third was the Polish alphabet, and the twenty-fourth was the Czech alphabet. The twenty-fifth was the Slovak alphabet, and the twenty-sixth was the Hungarian alphabet. The twenty-seventh was the Romanian alphabet, and the twenty-eighth was the Bulgarian alphabet. The twenty-ninth was the Serbian alphabet, and the thirtieth was the Croatian alphabet. The thirty-first was the Slovenian alphabet, and the thirty-second was the Macedonian alphabet. The thirty-third was the Albanian alphabet, and the thirty-fourth was the Bosnian alphabet. The thirty-fifth was the Montenegrin alphabet, and the thirty-sixth was the Herzegovinian alphabet. The thirty-seventh was the Serbian Cyrillic alphabet, and the thirty-eighth was the Russian Cyrillic alphabet. The thirty-ninth was the Ukrainian Cyrillic alphabet, and the fortieth was the Belarusian Cyrillic alphabet. The forty-first was the Polish Cyrillic alphabet, and the forty-second was the Czech Cyrillic alphabet. The forty-third was the Slovak Cyrillic alphabet, and the forty-fourth was the Hungarian Cyrillic alphabet. The forty-fifth was the Romanian Cyrillic alphabet, and the forty-sixth was the Bulgarian Cyrillic alphabet. The forty-seventh was the Serbian Cyrillic alphabet, and the forty-eighth was the Croatian Cyrillic alphabet. The forty-ninth was the Slovenian Cyrillic alphabet, and the fiftieth was the Macedonian Cyrillic alphabet. The fifty-first was the Albanian Cyrillic alphabet, and the fifty-second was the Bosnian Cyrillic alphabet. The fifty-third was the Montenegrin Cyrillic alphabet, and the fifty-fourth was the Herzegovinian Cyrillic alphabet. The fifty-fifth was the Serbian Cyrillic alphabet, and the fifty-sixth was the Russian Cyrillic alphabet. The fifty-seventh was the Ukrainian Cyrillic alphabet, and the fifty-eighth was the Belarusian Cyrillic alphabet. The fifty-ninth was the Polish Cyrillic alphabet, and the sixtieth was the Czech Cyrillic alphabet. The sixty-first was the Slovak Cyrillic alphabet, and the sixty-second was the Hungarian Cyrillic alphabet. The sixty-third was the Romanian Cyrillic alphabet, and the sixty-fourth was the Bulgarian Cyrillic alphabet. The sixty-fifth was the Serbian Cyrillic alphabet, and the sixty-sixth was the Croatian Cyrillic alphabet. The sixty-seventh was the Slovenian Cyrillic alphabet, and the sixty-eighth was the Macedonian Cyrillic alphabet. The sixty-ninth was the Albanian Cyrillic alphabet, and the seventieth was the Bosnian Cyrillic alphabet. The seventy-first was the Montenegrin Cyrillic alphabet, and the seventy-second was the Herzegovinian Cyrillic alphabet. The seventy-third was the Serbian Cyrillic alphabet, and the seventy-fourth was the Russian Cyrillic alphabet. The seventy-fifth was the Ukrainian Cyrillic alphabet, and the seventy-sixth was the Belarusian Cyrillic alphabet. The seventy-seventh was the Polish Cyrillic alphabet, and the seventy-eighth was the Czech Cyrillic alphabet. The seventy-ninth was the Slovak Cyrillic alphabet, and the eightieth was the Hungarian Cyrillic alphabet. The eighty-first was the Romanian Cyrillic alphabet, and the eighty-second was the Bulgarian Cyrillic alphabet. The eighty-third was the Serbian Cyrillic alphabet, and the eighty-fourth was the Croatian Cyrillic alphabet. The eighty-fifth was the Slovenian Cyrillic alphabet, and the eighty-sixth was the Macedonian Cyrillic alphabet. The eighty-seventh was the Albanian Cyrillic alphabet, and the eighty-eighth was the Bosnian Cyrillic alphabet. The eighty-ninth was the Montenegrin Cyrillic alphabet, and the ninetieth was the Herzegovinian Cyrillic alphabet. The hundredth was the Serbian Cyrillic alphabet.

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Fff Gg Hh Ii
Jji Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr
Sfts Ttt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz. &c.

altern

al'tār tōmb, a raised monument surmounting a tomb, having a resemblance to an altar: *al'tār* recumbent.

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Anatomy

CAROL STETSER

Already have I once been a boy and a girl, and
a bush and a bird, and a silent fish in the sea.

EMPEDOCLES

Purifications

ANCIENT ALTARS

3. figuratively, a shrine; a place of worship.
4. in shipbuilding, one of the steps or ledges, the flights of which form the sides of a dry dock.
5. to lead to the altar; to marry.
al'tār-āge, n. 1. the revenue accruing from offerings made at an altar.
2. offerings made upon an altar or to a church.
al'tār boy, a boy or man who helps a priest, vicar, etc. at religious services, especially at Mass.
al'tār cloth, a cloth to lay upon an altar in churches.
al'tār cushion (un-), a cushion laid upon the altar in some churches to support the service book.
al'tār fire, sacrificial fire upon an altar; hence, religious fervor, or religious

vicar (un-), a priest, or piece of
ced above and behind the altar
a reared. [Obs.]

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the stone constituting the sur-
ar.
a mass priest. [Obs.]

hēr, met; pine, marine, bird, pin; nōte, mōve, fōr, atōm, not; mōon, book;

3. to resew parts of (a garment) for a better fit.
Syn.—change, modify, metamorphose, trans-

al'tār-ā-bil'i-ty, n. alterableness.
al'tār-ā-ble, a. that can be altered.
al'tār-ā-ble-ness, n. the quality of being alterable; variableness.
al'tār-ā-bly, adv. in a manner that can be al-

alterare, alteration, change or

change a

cold sub- becomes

specific- to grad-

ually restore the normal functions of the body.

al'tār-ā-tive, n. a medicine or treatment which gradually restores to health.

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'COVERING THE DEATH OF DERRIDA

by Frank Davey

(From *Aporias*, cover)

1.

Would be properly mine. Derrida has repeatedly. Be an appropriate question. Various ways. The analytic of death. "My death – is it possible?" Have and account for. Between singularity and generality. Would be properly mine. That is the question. The whole of his work. The analytic of death. A new frontier. How is this question. The apothetical obligation. Theorizations of death. Must take place. More properly mine. Histories of death. The trans-national trans-cultural law. A figure of death. An analytical tour de force. The aporia of "my death." Must take place from now on. Without compromising it. Broached the question. The corresponding necessity. And yet to respect. And death. One of the aporetic experiences. Nothing closer. "My death." How and by whom. How this figure. How is this.

2.

Aporias. Dying. Awaiting. Limits. Truth. *S'attendre. Limites. Verité.* Death.

Question. Book. Death.

Question. Whom. Question. Moment.

Moment. Death.

Experiences. Essay. Experience. Death.

Subject. Experience. Nothing. Me. Death.

Book. Significance. Issue. Work. Present. Years. Contexts. Ways. Aporia. Concern. Frontier. Debate.

Work. Place. Debate. Aporia. Singularity. Generality. Specificity. Experience. Law. Specificity. Aporia. Necessity. Tradition. Critique.

Critique. Necessity. Obligation. Foreigner. Alien. Foreign.

Foreigner. Figure. Death.

Death.

Figure. Foreign.

Figure. Analytic. Death.

Being. Time. *Tour. Force.* Standards. Discussion. Dealing. Texts. Limits. Aporias.

Discussion. Histories. Death.

Theorizations. Death.

Scope. Investigation. Impact. Aporia. Death.

Excerpt from *Intimate Journal* by Nicole Brossard Translated by Barbara Godard

Rampike is delighted to present the following excerpt from Nicole Brossard's Intimate Journal. Nicole Brossard was one of the first major contributors to this journal and it is always a pleasure to include her latest writing. This remarkable text was translated by Barbara Godard and was recently released by Mercury Press ISBN: 1-55128-104-X (CDN \$17.95 – US \$14.95 -- purchase c/o nwpassages.com or at most major bookstores).

Intimate Journal has been compared favorably to the works of Gertrude Stein and Simone de Beauvoir, Intimate Journal circumvents the world, in a journey through time, and an exploration of the consistency of the individual, experiential and accumulative. Love, Japan, Paris, exhilarating moments of epiphany, motherhood and adventure emerge during this quest for ecstasy. Nicole Brossard, well-known for her non-fiction, poetry and fiction, regularly offers us alter-native perspectives and texts that transcend limits of genre. Intimate Journal has been translated from its original French into Japanese, Spanish and English.

Theory. 24 February 1983

Tonight, I'm writing my journal but I don't understand yet what's at stake in the subject. Does one write a journal, as if, as they say, I'm going to tell everything? Is that enough? And why should it be? Certainly, the world begins with us. It's an optical illusion, of course, but one of a certain dimension, not quite enough for history, yet the only one with which we can think about remaking the world and taking stock of our existence; measuring the fullness of our desires.

To think of being able to live in real time is the only illusion in which I find the courage and pleasure of writing. Because all life of the mind is articulated in delayed time no matter whether the differential is calculated in micro-seconds or in light-years. To think of being able to live in real time is an invention of the twentieth century, a kind of "new novel" with strong sensations that leaves me suspended in the sounds of the fury of writing.

Normandy, Cerisy-la-Salle, August 1980

I'm sitting in the room in the chateau where the working sessions on the decade of Quebec literature take place. A young woman is sitting beside me; another resembles Isak Dinesen, the Danish novelist, as she appears as a pierrot and ravishing woman on a postcard. I look from one to the other, I write in my notebook that they make me dream, in a parallel entry I note a quotation from Flaubert, I am listening to a theorist at the same time as I watch the clouds pass over, clouds that form as I watch, announcing the storm, wet grass, dampness, insomnia.

Cerisy, pinnacle of theoretical debates, Cerisy Ricardou, Sarraute, Butor, Robbe-Grillet, Cerisy the Nouveau Roman. Yes. But above all, Cerisy is an atmosphere. Bats at nightfall, petanque, ping-pong, evenings of rock and roll and Calvados. Cerisy, it's theoretical and enchanting like the slogans on our North American T-shirts. California Mickey Mouse, Marilyn and Deep Purple in the heart of Normandy for a new narrative.

Cerisy's the old new novel that comes to life with theory at nine a.m. like a new narrative after coffee. There are long walks, snatches of conversation, specialists, people who bond in friendship, their desires, their topics. A bit of literature takes responsibility for a bit of sociology, some linguistics, a little psychoanalysis, in a great many words, what seduces in delayed transmission.

Cerisy, 13 August 1980

I'm sitting in the garden. Beside me, a red-headed poet with a secular imagination is looking at the landscape. We have our ballpoint pens and notebooks within easy reach. We converse unhurriedly, outlining in our heads, he, science-fiction characters, I, what could become a novel. Two women, one a redhead, are busy picking up the coffee cups the invited participants have left scattered here and there on the tables. We smoke slowly. We speak slowly. In the distance a Quebec writer is jogging; Louisa and Oriana Spaziani are making their way toward the village. Someone is playing the piano; it must be the German who never speaks. Roger Des Roches and I are talking about France as if about a book we will have read a long, long time ago, a book filled with cigarette butts, cafés, chateaus, perfumes, and writing. We are talking in the pure silence of the afternoon, but basically... in the depths of this silence, we think only about writing.

Paris, 19 August 1980

A sleepless night. And yet, I'm alive. In that case, then!

Montreal, 28 February 1983.

Thinking about remaking the world or imagining it. I examine this actual experience in real time as practised in conversation, smile, tears, or laughter.

The same day

How to confront the essential? What is the quintessential? It's always abstract, wordless, and yet it's a word, an image, a mental perspective. The brain keeps surprises in store for us. These are the only things that matter to me. Surprises and riddles to decode.

3 March 1983

En route to Victoria, British Columbia

For two days I haven't stopped writing. I hadn't foreseen anything. Inspired, as they say. Now, I'm catching my breath. But which one? First, I'll read Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*. A beautiful agonizing text. Then, I'll open, I open Clarice Lispector's *The Stream of Life*. It takes my breath away. Radiance, beauty, intensity. I read no more than two or three lines at a time. I am almost trembling. I'm excited, incredulous, before such beauty.

Vancouver. From the airport, I head downtown in order to get the hydrofoil that will take me to Victoria. The taxi driver talks to me about the Bible, about the parallelism of languages, he says that women poets think about their careers instead of thinking about their duty as mothers. He's mad like an image of a cradle cast into a raging sea. He's more dangerous than a Jesuit converted to pornography. The taxi driver is so nice, so pleasant, that you no longer see the lamb he is patiently strangling.

Victoria, later the same day

In the small port of Victoria it's spring. Such a beautiful light, the smell of the sea. I say beauty, beauty, a bit like Pol Pelletier in *A Clash of Symbols*. Yes, beauty, and I sink into the greatest sense of well-being, solicited by the clemency of the climate. My good humour is boundless. Lauri, with whom I am to stay for the weekend, comes to meet me. We take a taxi. The driver's a poet, too! Another who knows everything. Then he asks us if we know the poet Pat... Lauri immediately replies yes and this woman was murdered by her husband. "My uncle was a bastard," said the driver and nobody thought of adding anything at all.

Victoria, 4 March 1983

I am here to participate in a poetry festival. Fifteen women will read their work during the three sessions of readings that have been planned. In the morning, I walk for a long time on the streets of the little town of Oak Bay. The perfume of the cherry trees in bloom accompanies me right to the sea. Beauty, beauty. Then my head fills with the names of trees and ferns: Licorice Fern, Forsythia, Prunus Cerasifera, Arbutus. Arbutus Street, Lauri will say, is the most beautiful street. For a brief moment, I thought of the *Route de la Trace* in Martinique, but I know there is really no relation.

Then it's the first meeting with the poets. Beauty, beauty of faces, the proud bearing of bodies, the tenacity of their gazes, an English sense of humour. I relive the same emotion I knew at the time of *A Clash of Symbols* and *Têtes de pioches*. They are all wonderful these women from the Prairies, mountains, and Upper Canada. Some of them recount terrible things in their poems, and others are terribly funny in the moment of truth of their half-hour reading. I listen to their voices. They pronounce the names of landscapes by the seaside, in the mountains, and they also speak about what happens in the living rooms of the middle class or in shacks lost in the backwoods. Later in the evening, when we are partying, they remember Ireland, or Scotland, or Poland, and their eyes light up in a different way as if to make a country young again. And later still in the evening, the country is rejuvenated and transformed into an Indian woman sitting in a village of Cowichan or Bella Coola and the country becomes a ritual of vivid colours. Then the country ages again and the Indian woman is waiting on the streets of Vancouver while a white client approaches her, saying, "How much?" and, like the salmon reascending the river, she knows when climbing the stairs what awaits her.

Night of 5 March 1983

Sleepless night because I have to take an airplane very early in the morning and I prefer not to sleep. Conversations. Some tea. More tea. We exchange books. Now it's time to leave for the airport. We take the road that hugs the coast. Dawn, the sea, arbutus trees, big cedars. Fatigue stretches the gaze. I no longer know whether it's the Orient or Canada in the distance. On my return, Montreal seems a strange city. Taxi!

7 March 1983

There's perpetual movement between living and writing. Really, it may be between writing and writing. Private life, writing life. "She lived on words," they'll say one day. So what's the use of a journal, then? In the last few days, I realize I'm more attentive to what I'm doing, to the appointments I make, to the people I meet, to the events in which I participate, as if it were a matter of ensuring the continuity of this journal. I find that perverse. The subject is getting sucked in.

Is the life of an author a private life? Where and when does biography end? Perhaps biography is only what surrounds the writing subject, a sort of blurred halo resembling childhood or death.

Le Carbet, Martinique, 1 November 1981

Six o'clock and night already. The rustle of insects. S. is writing a postcard. Michèle is resting while I read the text of her interview with Djuna Barnes. Adrenalin writing. Martine, whom we call Martin, is analyzing the results of ultrasounds she has brought back from the hospital. She says that tomorrow she will give me an ultrasound. An echo. My heart laid bare. I say that the graphics are so beautiful I want one for a book cover. Lives, trajectories, hallucinations. Later, we are going to Saint-Pierre the village that was forcibly reborn from its ashes one day. It's All Saints Day and the cemetery is lit with candles. We walk among the graves. Dressed in their most beautiful dresses and their best suits, women and men chat beside their dead. A little farther, on the church steps, a young nun prays fervently. Her beauty is as though indispensable to the prayer. Night invades me. The moon is round, full of echoes. I think about the beauty of women and I want to write. But I won't because we are going to dance the beguine. Move hips, sway hips, birds of paradise, night is rhythm. And then Michèle says to me: "Look at that woman over there with her big hat, you might say, a black Djuna, a woman come out of nightwood, a heroine lost in her great love." I look at this woman and the world with her bends completely backwards.

9 March 1983

and the world with her bends completely backwards. Today the mother of my very best friend died. For Germaine, today will be a permanent today. A date as precise as the one when she emerged alive from the body of another woman.

Water, when the waters break and I'll know nothing about it, stretched out on the operating table, because Sesame, open up, flounders in wombs during caesarians and mothers sleep with exemplary soundness. Anaesthetized. Mothers in hospitals are hot, cold, tremble, revive, writhe, and bellow in rut. Mothers sign with a big X over the eyes of their children, sign the end of the eternal recommencement when they leave the hospital or when they leave reality or when they leave with a big X on their bellies. Yes mothers have all the attractions and all the trumps for the Xs that dance in their eyes, mothers have obligations, rendezvous, mothers draw inspiration from the deepest silence. Mothers suddenly desire the sea and the salt just like the amazons, gazing on the sea, must have tasted the salt of their lovers as reality, mothers become grave and gravitate around their centre of gravity and then float, aerial, mothers who invent humanity in inventing their daughters in their own image and in the fuzziness of this image, mothers invent their life like tigresses, mothers put fire in the eyes of the she-wolves on the uttermost patriarchal steppes and the she-wolves become women in the crystalline curve of humanity. When this has been accomplished, the mothers say they have no time to keep their journals. Only their voice is heard then and their voices are never quite their own voice. They are voices that have travelled to the horizon like little clouds. And life gets ordered in spite of their sentences of love, and life erases their sobs.

24 April 1974

I see you, I look at you. Intensely is only a word. It's love at first sight, body and soul a whole life long. Bolt from the blue, light, energy. Your life to come. You are my daughter one day where the real and the fiction overlap. You are the one called La Capucine and through you the world is an April day radiant in your black hair. My sweet downy girl, I dreamed you were born already knowing how to speak.

14 March 1983

Montreal sunny. A luminosity full of vibrations. Almost spring in the clothes. They're all quite sombre this morning, in mourning, in tears, people dressed in black. It's the day of the funeral.

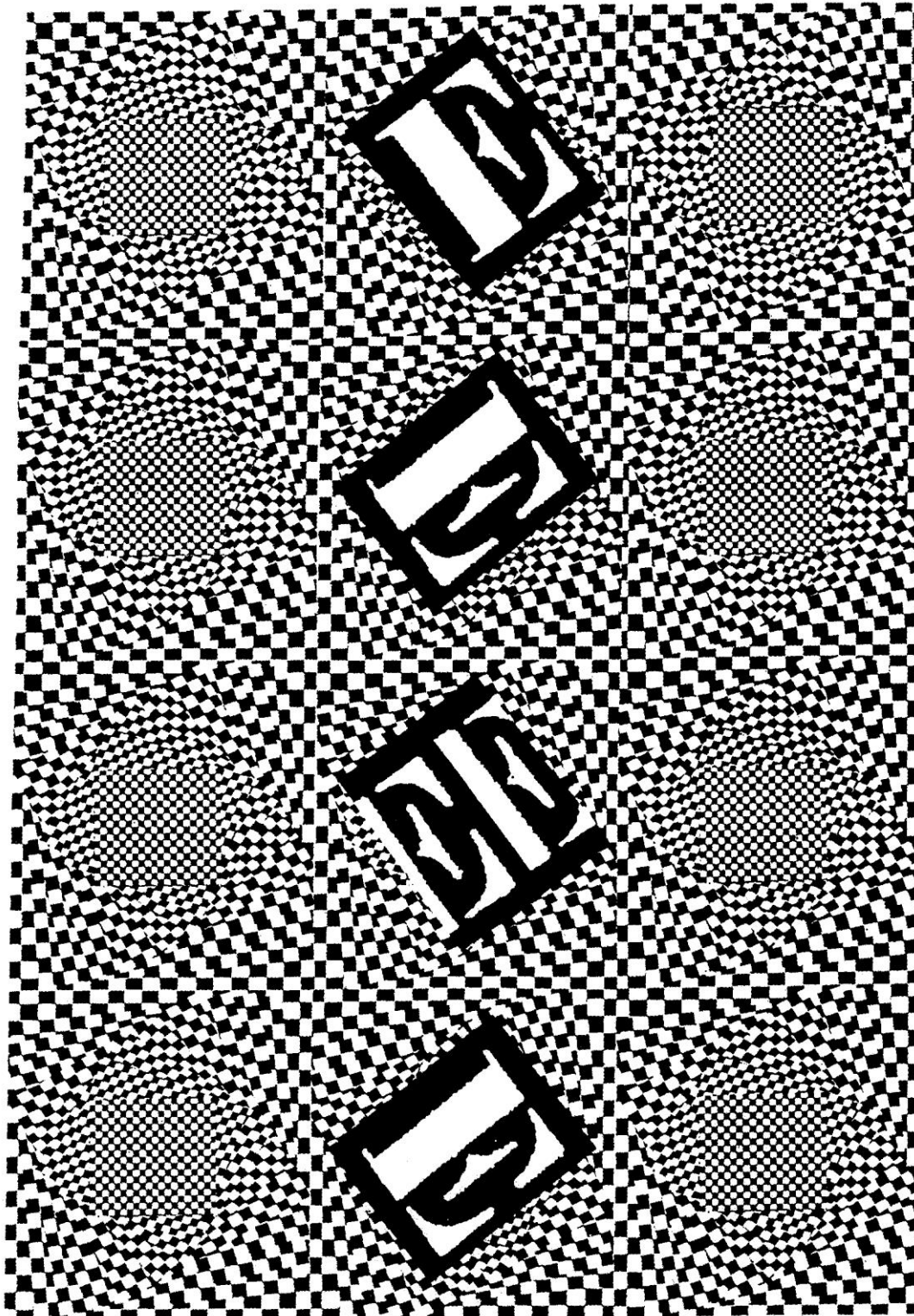
At the church, an entire childhood resurfaces, the music of *Kyrie eleison*, the smell of incense. Then total revolt when the priest opens his mouth. Everything he says is gendered masculine: men, brothers, the son, sons, the father, fathers. It's difficult. It's unbearable, it's odious when you say goodbye to a woman and hand her a servant's apron.

In the Metro, I try to forget the mourning, my sadness, and I continue reading *Des filles de Beauté* but where I've reached on page sixty-six I happen upon a burial not far from where I lived for the first five years of my life. De Lanaudière, Beaubien, those were streets not to be crossed. In the metro, a woman wears a button on her black coat and Van Gogh stares at me with his air that was thought to be mad, the madman's look in his self-portrait, his air of resemblance, his intimate-journal look. And I say to myself that art is a refuge when you have the time or it is not too late. And I say to myself it is not too late to return and write my journal. The day is still young. The weather is fine in the No. 51 bus at the corner of Saint-Laurent and boulevard Saint-Joseph and the light is going to change, for sure, you can't spend a whole life on red. And suddenly it comes back to me: in front of the church porch the beauty of the petals of the birds of paradise strewn on the ground. Then I wondered whether there was any relation between Martinique, death, and going to paradise.

Yes, to all this, I've dreamed for a long time of trying to ruse with reality while thinking about being able to live in the deferral of the virtual, leaving Paris-Carotte to her fate on page sixty-nine of *Des filles de Beauté* and forgetting the red-headed woman who was picking up the coffee cups in the garden of the Chateau of Cerisy-la-Salle. I still think about all this while saying to myself that it was a single episode and the day was not going to end then for all that, no more than life, moreover.

enough say everything in the closest second rustle moves which (hi)story the fictionalized biography in a chateau a notebook dreams/dies with insomnia my dayfall in snatches seduces one a red-headed woman who laughs writing surprised by the voyage so much beauty the seaside and ferns other readings of the subject bio-life prow child the echo of birds in a bed signs surprise the fuzziness of the image orders the sentences of love blotter the light is going to change mused while saying to myself continue art is a refuge life too late candle lit beautiful dresses body prodigious with audacity in your black hair a whole life I write in my notebook a half-hour of reading for real a glance blinding life turns on a few words

who laughs writing prow child
life too late
in a bed other readings
so much beauty seaside
i'll write the subject in snatches
beauty seaside blinding



Text/image: Christian Burgaud (France)



bissett 04 / for mdr

"If they take away our brains" by bill bissett

At the POWER PLANT: Art Documentation

featuring Janet Cardiff's: *Forty-Part Motet*, & Laura Kikauka's: *Exactly the Same, but Completely Different*

In Janet Cardiff's *Forty-Part Motet*, forty separately recorded voices are played back through forty speakers circling the exhibition space. The effect created is deeply moving and has earned the work a popularity with visitors that is rarely encountered in contemporary art. Winner of the Millennium Prize 2001, the work is a reworking of *Spem in Alium* by Thomas Tallis, a 16th-century English composer who is said to have produced one of the most complex pieces of polyphonic choral music ever composed. Even though Cardiff's true medium in this work is sound, her emphasis on the sculptural qualities of sound is what distinguishes her as an artist. *Forty-Part Motet*, originally commissioned by the Salisbury Festival and performed by the Salisbury Cathedral Choir, is on loan from the collection of the National Gallery of Art, Ottawa. Cardiff and George Bures Miller, represented Canada at the 2001 *Venice Biennale* with their acclaimed work, *The Paradise Institute*. Janet Cardiff's installations and walking pieces layer sound on visuals, blending real experience with prerecorded creations to disrupt and delight. Cardiff's work was also included in the opening exhibition of the Tate Modern in London and has been featured in exhibitions across Canada and abroad.

In conjunction with Janet Cardiff's presentation, **The Power Plant** also presented a new multi-media project, *Hear Here*, for youth aged 15-25 that combines contemporary art, sound recording, digital editing, and new media. Over a series of workshops, participants used **Cardiff's *Forty-Part Motet*** as the model for an on-line, site-specific sound work. The site was the Toronto Island. Recordings were gathered from all over the island, digitally assembled and processed in a professional sound studio, and broadcast, first over the Internet and then at the Sound Travels Sound Art Festival in August. This program was co-produced by The Power Plant, Charles Street Video and New Adventures in Sound Art.

Berlin-based Meaford, Ontario artist **Laura Kikauka's** exhibition, *Exactly the Same, but Completely Different*, is a new large-scale installation that presents a unique approach to mixed media sculpture. For the last twenty years, Kikauka has manifested a keen interest in material culture by bringing together vast mounds of outdated electronic gadgetry, industrially produced anonymous crafts and quality junk sorted by colour or some other common characteristic. Her process-oriented sculptures offer an arresting blend of slapstick humour, kitsch sentiments, party games and obscure popular music, all vying for attention in an assemblage of objects that veers from extreme orderliness to anarchic chaos.

Janet Cardiff's Forty-Part Motet was organized and circulated by the National Gallery of Art, Ottawa. The exhibition was generously supported by Lazard, Victoria Jackman & Bruce Kuwabara, Nancy McCain & William Morneau, Laura Rapp & Jay Alan Smith, Evan Siddall and Toronto Friends of the Visual Arts.

The Power Plant is located at 231 Queens Quay West. For exhibition and tours information, the public can call **416-973-4949** or visit **www.thepowerplant.org**.

Media Contacts:

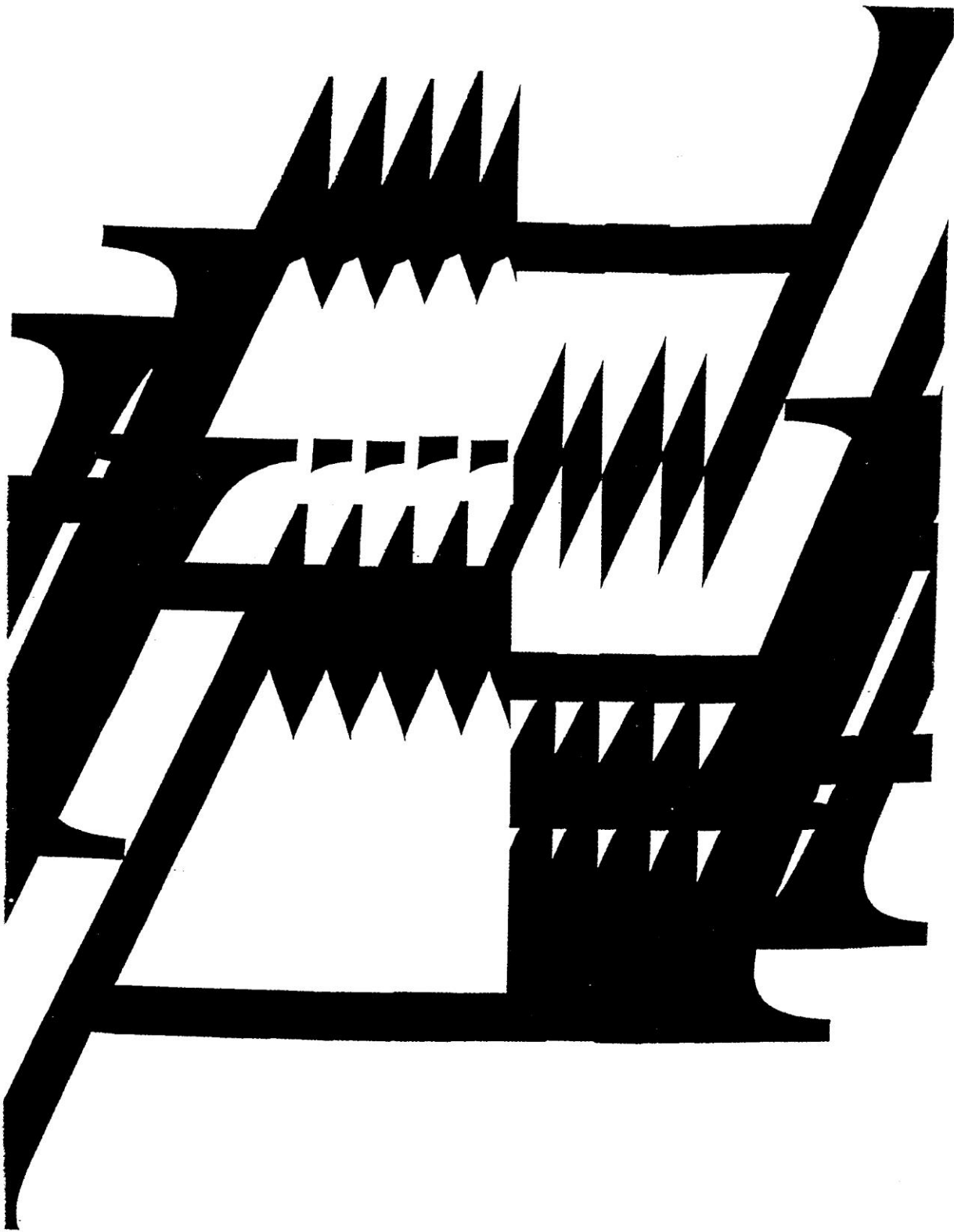
Linda Lontis, 416-973-4381,
David Gates, 416-973-4494,



Janet Cardiff & George B. Miller's *Forty-Part Motet*



Laura Kikauka's *Exactly the Same, but Completely Different*



"Narcissus A, 8" by Paul Dutton (Canada)

JUSQUABOUTISTE*

by **KAREN MAC CORMACK**

know meaning of actions act as measurement of self
 how else to determine *subtle is as confidence does*
 animadvert a katabatic wind**

accounted foreign between what register falls
 some truck the waxing
 position of gravity in *just so*

what would we wait for and where would that matter
 histories dissolve protagonists themselves
 waft begin and *sotto voce* a clearance

remembers the wild flowers so seldom addressed
 don't contradict any passion to prevail
 (rarity a becoming form)

to never say never ever again
 there's architecture but property taxes don't
 improve it *raisonné d'être* aside

endless forms serrated
instinct a proverb
 offered as evidence in disguise (2004)

* up to the end

** a local wind flowing down a slope cooled by loss of heat through radiation at night

PARMENIDES

by Steve McCaffery

Over here, or there, seems to be a potential for action, or then again, over here, or there, might be a different place mentioned in an alternative tour guide. An action includes a reason, a potentiality and a translation leading to fatigue, weight gain, and hot flushes. The voltage currently running through the pet canary named Logic is the same voltage running through the entire last century of existence named Post. This is where it left it exactly as they found it. This is where it should have been some time ago had it not interfered with it. It may be posited in language as position is or sometimes at least in a case where the yards and yards of string unravel in the word yard uttered by it, or through it, into the yard outside. It is fortunate that inside is not a possibility. Possibly, however, or, wherever it moves there is, in some way or some other way at this point a necessity to pause and cross between the Logic and the Post, both mentioned in the present reading which may, or may not, be interrupted by a thought upon the sophistication of current condominium living or dying. If that thought is, or is not, appropriate to the alternative text at hand, or not at hand, the voltage running through the pet canary named Logic may, or may not, interfere with the seven, or more than seven, current possibilities. What remains possible, or impossible, at this point is a renewed desire to intercept, or not intercept, the current voltage flowing into the sophistication of current condominium living or dying. At which point speech, or the thought of speech, may formulate an identical or different axiom, thereby permitting a quotation from Parmenides to enter the text with relevance or irrelevance. ["Thinking and Being are the same Thing."] What will be certain here, or somewhere else, is that a different frog named Cognitive will have plopped into a Beachfront pool named Infinity. It will then be coterminous with it if it aligns the axiom to a place between it or beyond it. The yard might then unravel into several, or more than several, subsets causing the voltage running through the pet canary named Logic to remain unaltered. This event may, or may not, occur within a space of History, or at the spot where the pet canary named Logic disappears, or reappears. The alternative tour guide might remain alternative but

only to the point at which all current voltages are directed into the current Labor of the Negative. Here, it wishes to say it is not where it should be having been interfered by it before it entered the *conatus* of its being. The pet canary named Logic might now reflect upon the sophistication of its own condominium living or dying and yet remain on, or suddenly depart from, the same branch on the tree called Annihilation where the current voltage running through the different frog named Cognitive enters its very own new axiom. Exciting indeed! However, Manifestation may, or may not, adopt a viewpoint different from the one determined, or not determined, by the Beachfront Pool named Infinity. Only then will it position it correctly, or incorrectly, in the space between it or before it. It will then be, or not be, its own simple fact that over here seems to be a potential for action. Yet an event caught in an act is not a situation, therefore the one is not [Plato, *Parmenides*]. Hence Logic emerges as the Cognitive Labor of the Negative intercepting the names of the pet canary and the different frog in the *conatus* of its being. What is now certain is that the different frog and the pet canary once named Logic are not a singular event caught in a singular act occurring in a space of History. This will have been true or untrue from the start if this is a text, or not a text, on love, nor a poem on meaning. At which point the current voltage might dissipate into several, or more than several, alternative possibilities: ancestral repetition, liberated continuities, Judith Butler on a warm September night, the transparency of nitroglycerine. Perhaps Judith Butler activates an incomplete “I” positioned between, or beyond, a different pet canary named Language caught up in the Labor of the Negative. At which point it will be, or not be, its very own and singular situation between or beyond it as it leaves the branch on the tree named Annihilation if this is a final chapter of a book entitled *The Conatus of Being*, conceived in the yards and yards of string unraveling in the word yard uttered by it or by Judith Butler standing in the yard outside.

Cleveland-Buffalo 20 Nov. 2004
Revised Buffalo Nov. 21.

NORM's ROBOTS featuring the works of Norman White at the Koffler Gallery

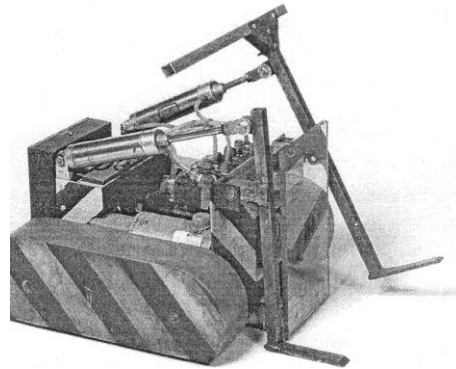
Curated by Carolyn Bell Farrell

Norm's Robots marks the first solo show in twenty years by this influential Canadian artist. As a survey of Norman White's kinetic work produced over the past three decades, it comprises both animate robotic works as well as static presentations, supported by video documentation and live performances.

Norman White began building kinetic electronic devices in 1966, which he loosely referred to as "machines" and exhibited his first major electronic work in 1969 in New York. Since then, he has shown throughout Canada, the United States and Europe, with solo shows at the Vancouver Art Gallery and the National Gallery of Canada (1975/76). White also taught electronics, mechanics and computer programming at OCAD in a department he helped to initiate in 1978. He retired this year. Norman White lives in Durham, Ontario.

Norman White adapts sophisticated technology to an aesthetic project that explores the implications of the human/machine interface, inviting a reflection on our expectations of its accomplishments. Simultaneously, he reveals the increasing rift between humankind and the analogical machines we construct to improve everyday life. Characteristically, his kinetic works do not follow a preset program; rather, they follow their own course of action within prescribed limits. The interaction of logical elements in the program with the unpredictable nature of the environment results in a performance that is variant and emergent.

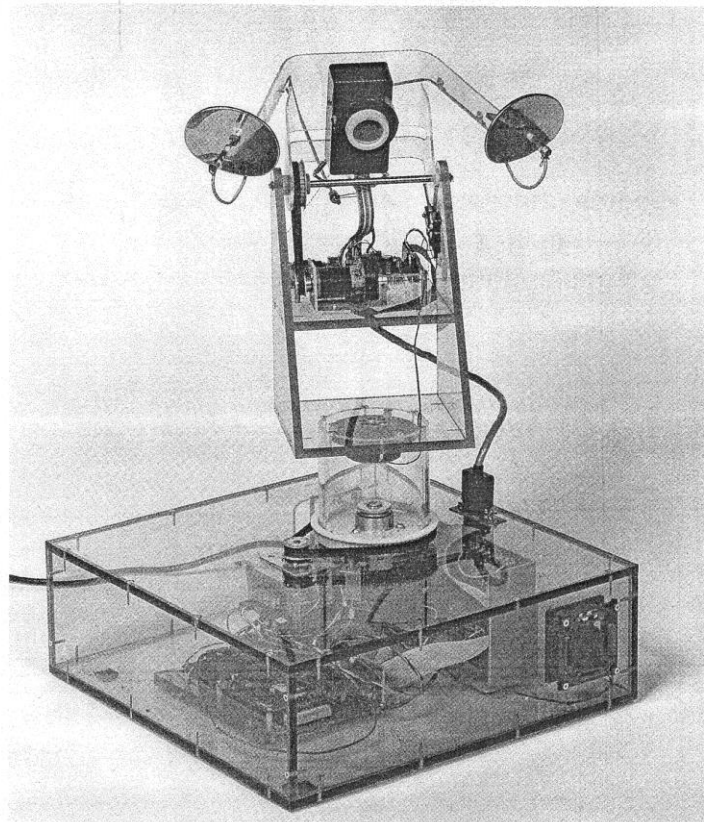
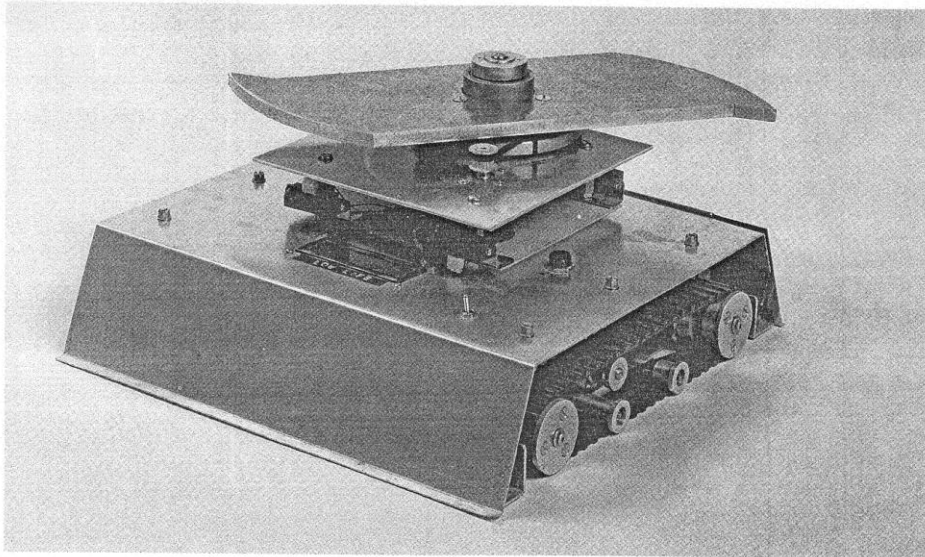
White builds machines that embody and express humanity's complex and fragile musings. His robotic sculptures are often endowed with comic movements and intentions. Mimicking human behaviours, their anthropomorphic qualities are disarming, suggestive of rudimentary personalities. For examples, in *The Helpless Robot* (1987-2002) White reverses the traditional role of the machine in service of humankind: his robot is literally seeking help, dependent on our cooperation to achieve its desired results. Initially, his robot engages the viewer's interaction through polite requests for assistance: to be turned this way and that. As we accede to its wishes, the favours it expects escalate to dictatorial demands for attention. White's robot projects an apparent life of its own, wherein function and limitation are interpreted as will and vulnerability.



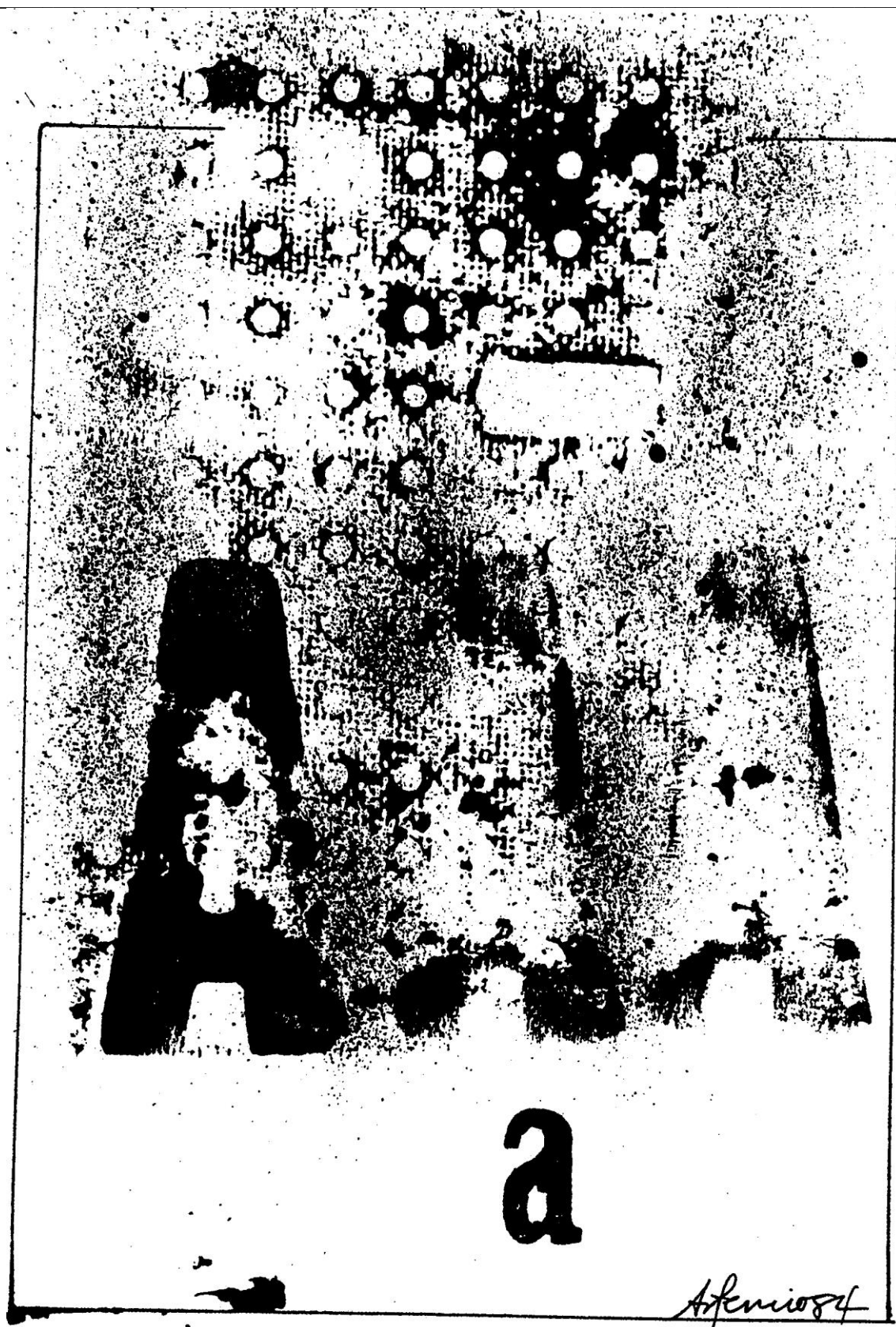
c/o The Koffler Gallery Toronto,
4588 Bathurst St., Toronto (416) 636-1880

Goody 4 Shoes, 1999-2003 Steel, motors, pneumatics, batteries, radio control system, custom electronics and software 47 x 43 x 57 cm -- A Sumo-wrestling robot, clever class (weight limited), presented as a static work when not participating in "The Challenge."

Low Life, 2003 -- Aluminum, motors, batteries, infrared sensors, embedded micro-controller, custom electronics and software 18 x 30 x 30 cm -- A Sumo-wrestling robot, autonomous class (able to locate the enemy on its own), presented as a static work when not participating in "The Challenge."



Facing Out Laying Low, 1976-2002 -- Lexan, Plexiglas, servomotors, embedded microcontroller, custom electronics and software 70 x 46 x 46 cm -- A robotic work in search of novelty in action, capable of discerning changing dynamics in the environment.



Graphic image by Artemio Iglesias (Cuba)

TWO TEXTS

FROM: *SHAVING CUTS ON THE MOON*

by Gary Barwin

PUP-TENT OF THE RENT HEART

It was one of those nights when I stood on the mountain and tried to make my brain scream. I held a dog-eared Hamlet above my parka hood and mouthed: Be loud, tenth grade copy of Hamlet. Be loud as the screaming map of Scandinavia. Stun the mountain goats huddled in ram-dominated family groups behind the rain-curtained caves. Wake my tonsils, removed when I was eight, now nestled together in a jar on a shelf in my ex-wife's pantry, for they have been dreaming these many years of dancing together, their shiny red shoes tapping on the polished floor of my bright and tango-strewn future while a tuba player clears his throat with an elliptical and narcissistic ahem.

And I realize now that there's nothing as loud as having your ears used as waterskis. Except maybe when your wife invites a team of highly-motivated shirpas to use your red stretched heart as a basecamp pup-tent, one of them with an allergy to tentpegs sneezing so explosively that he makes an aeolian harp of the guy wires attaching your heart to the tuba player's small red sportscar, the tuba player driving away with your wife, a scale model of Sir Edmund Hillary, and several goats. They go to the drive-in, snickering when they order an extralarge megabucket of your tears with a side of your tongue. The tuba player and your wife crawl into the burnished cave of the tuba, mindless of scurrying trumpet-faced vermin. They are deep in the golden coils of your brain and can't find a way out. What they don't know is that waiting at a big desk at the end of the labyrinth is a minotaur that you've dressed in razorlike stripes. They will be made red ribbons in its embrace and used as bookmarks indicating my place in Hamlet, in the world, in that place where my tonsils, twin red barnacles, once clung to my throatwall.

For some things last forever. The red sportscar of the sun, the moon's pale waterski, the shirpa huddled at the base of the grave digger's skull, praying for snow. And when the snow finally does fall on my jar-liberated tonsils standing outside the dancehall having a smoke, it will sizzle like the underside of stars on spacetime's endless griddle. And surely somewhere beyond our corner of the universe, the tuba players will clear their throats, bring their tubas to their lips, play real low for someone else's infinite wife.

STAR DUST

A bicycle rests against a parking meter. Thirty five minutes left on the meter, though the bicycle can stay all day, for years even, snow collecting then melting on its wide triangular seat. New flags are raised and squirrels and people evade or do not evade streetcars squealing down summery, then wintry then summery again streets. Someone, whose bones are visible through their baby fragile skin later remains or does not remain faithful to their lover or wife, arms getting sore while shoveling snow. A thousand people seem to be walking somewhere. From here, we can see a coupon for two-for-one Saturday night go-karting and paperclips everywhere. We can see the bicycle age and get weak and the parking meter pretend not to notice. We can see the other side of the stars and it seems a while since they've been dusted.

Excerpt from: *GOOD EGG BAD SEED* by Susan Holbrook

You like an epiphany or you like a surprise.

You are a binary thinker or you are and you aren't.

You say you basically dismantle 500 years of Western metaphysics in one fell swoop or you nap under a leaf's lip.

You think Modigliani painted nipples too small or you think Emily Carr painted trees too big.

Mangoes aren't worth the hairs in your teeth or they are.

Terror of disorder keeps you up at night or terror of order does.

You have a way with animals or squirrels smell your fear and attack.

You'd like to be cremated because you believe in ethereal reincarnation rather than bodily resurrection or you'd like to be cremated just to be sure you're really dead when they put you down there.

You think the only way to respond to a poem is to write another poem or you think the only way to respond to a poem is to run the other way.

You once rescued a duck or you once bagged a buck.

Your mother put peanut butter in the gutter of your celery or she filled it with Cheez Whiz.

You are torn between the Green Party and the NDP or you are torn between the Alliance and the Christian Heritage Party. Either way you can say, both are pretty good on the gay issue.

You flex your back or you flic your bic.

You'd like a cat in a basket or you'd like a bat in a casket.

You think you're too flat in the bazooms or too fat in the caboose.

You subscribe to Gourmet magazine or you don't want fruit in soup.

You get Gloria Steinam and Gertrude Stein mixed up or you get the Bangles and the GoGos mixed up.

Or Orson Welles, H.G. Wells, and George Orwell.

You think a Pap smear involves the Vatican somehow or you have an apron that says Bar-B-Cutie and you wear it.

When you see a flag at half-mast you worry another former Prime Minister has died or you worry another Ramone has died.

The figurative sway of language being uncommonly effective on you, you can't eat Blood oranges while you can eat Candy Apple Red nail polish. Or you live in Puce.

You think Ian Hanomansing was once fat or you think he will be fat.
You think Ian Hanomansing is the next Peter Mansbridge or you think Peter Mansbridge is the next Queen Mum.

You'd rather carve a war monument or you'd rather carve a loon.

Artillary or Fritillary.

You talk loudly in airport lineups or you are Canadian.

You used to think honeycomb was man-made or you used to think Mt. Rushmore was a natural phenomenon.

You are in tiptop shape or you are a teapot shape.

When you get a C you sink into a depression that forever scars your already tenuous sense of self-worth or you say "Alright, a C!"

You are a worry wart or you worry about your warts.

V's of geese are disturbing to you when they are asymmetrical, or when they are symmetrical.

You jilt or you are jilted.

You tilt or you are tilted.

You think you are more attractive and interesting than you are or you think you are far more attractive and interesting than you are.

When you knock over a glass you say "clumsy me!" or you say "who put that glass there?" or you say "stupid cup."

You mark the passing of each year with a new piercing or you go to the jewellers at the mall once, at 18, your clammy fingers shaking the jittery knuckles of the girl who's using the studgun for the first time. She's been taught to distract you, "How was your summer?" she asks, punching a needle into your right lobe. "Great," you say and her bracelets clink against the gun as she centres it over your left lobe. "How was your summer?" she asks, *punch*, "O.K." you say.

You order a bidet for your kitchen because it sounds kind of classy or you say no to a bodum because it sounds kind of dirty.

When your women's studies professor says the course will "not be about man-hating" you feel more comfortable or you are kind of disappointed.

Smashing through the guardrail and plummeting to your deaths you shout I love you or you shout Fuck.

You say I love you or you say I love you too.

You say Fuck you or you say Oh yeah? Fuck you.

The medium is the message, or raisins are the reason.

You have ants in your pants or a bee in your bonnet or a luna moth in your loincloth.

Your pencil is broken or your pen is leakin your Aunt Carla ain't Lorca or Uncle Louis isn't Catullus and fuzzy wuzzy wasn't jazzy has no knack for bugling has he taxi your artsy, or bus your bass, bust your bassoon, I stubbed my tubas! beg Mr. Music for the cornets and the lieder or sorry hummingbird there are hornets at the feeder.

From: *Good Egg Bad Seed*, Nomados Editions. Nomados Literary Publishers, run by Meredith & Peter Quartermain, prints new writing by Canadian, U.S. and British authors, including Lisa Robertson, Charles Bernstein, and Erin Moure. See ad on p. 74, and full list at: Contact Nomados at or P.O. Box 4031, 349 West Georgia St., Vancouver, British Columbia, V6B 3Z4, Canada.

WALKING THE ISLAND

Interview with John Bemrose by Karl Jirgens

*John Bemrose, author of is well known as an arts journalist whose articles and profiles have appeared regularly in Maclean's, where he is a contributing editor. **The Island Walkers** (McClelland & Stewart) was nominated for a Booker Prize in 2004. He has written for CBC Radio's Ideas, for the National Film Board, for the Globe and Mail, and for numerous other publications. He has written a play, *Mother Moon*, produced by the National Arts Centre, and published two poetry collections. Bemrose grew up in Paris, Ontario, the place that inspired the setting for *The Island Walkers*. John Bemrose has lived in Toronto since 1970, where he is at work on his second novel.*

KJ: I believe you once said that one of the inspirations for starting this novel was the fact that you were jealous of a friend who had been nominated for a major literary prize. So, how does it feel to be nominated for a Booker Prize and how have things changed for you, so far?

JB: Well, if my friend's success was an inspiration, it was a pretty minor one, compared to other things. In fact, I have a very ambiguous attitude to literary prizes. On the one hand, they stir up interest—which is to say, they sell books. Certainly *The Island Walkers* would not have done nearly as well this past year, had it not been for various prize nominations. For writers, prizes create a kind of competitive excitement that may help some—a desire for glory is not to be sniffed at, as a generator of good writing! On the other hand, I think juries choose the best book only about 50% of the time. The rest of the time the choice is dictated by a combination of poor taste and literary politics. So you have to take all these prizes with a grain of salt. Even if you happen to win one.

As for the Booker Prize, of course it was a thrill to be nominated. I love London, where I lived as a young man, and it would have been terrific to go back there in such circumstances. But even though I didn't make the short list, I got the best possible consolation prize: more time to write.

KJ: The first thing that struck me about your new book *The Island Walkers* (M & S) was your style. The opening lines offer a striking vision with an economy of language that I've rarely seen: "'A town of two rivers, its plunging valley an anomaly in the tedious southwestern Ontario plain. Bridges. Water at dusk. The play of ghosts on the sloping face of a dam. High windows shot with gold, glimpsed among maples. Streets that beckon and disappear. The traveller, coming across this place, might be forgiven for imagining that life is better here.'" Could you talk about your stylistics in this book? How much of your experience at the National Film Board and as a journalist, or poet or playwright do you think played a role in generating the vision and voices that emerge in this novel?

JB: I would say my experience as a scriptwriter, which was brief, had little influence. On the other hand, like nearly everyone in the culture, I'm saturated with the movies, and they have certainly reinforced the tendency of my imagination to be highly visual. Specifically, the movies of Robert Altman, with their multiple, intersecting story lines, were an inspiration. Of course there is a danger for novelists in coming too much under the spell of the movies. They can tempt you to turn away from developing the interiority of your characters, which is the novel's great strength, one not equaled by any other form.

As for journalism, if it had any effect, it would be to treat my own work with a fairly heartless objectivity. With the help of some good editors at Maclean's, I soon got used to quickly cutting out anything that didn't work, without regrets. Writing plays helped me see what a scene was—how it was both a little world on its own, and one that echoed and developed the larger world of the novel.

But the greatest influence was the writing of poetry, which teaches you extreme compression, precision and economy. The Prologue to *The Island Walkers*, which you quote, is written, at least in part, in a 'poetic' language. The rest of the book is written in plainer prose, with certain moments veering towards the poetic. I wanted a clear, fairly simple language, that suggested complexity through accumulation. If I had any models here, it would be Chekhov, and possibly the D.H. Lawrence of *Sons and Lovers*. Both those writers could be 'poetic' without breaking with the essential clarity and modesty of prose. One or two commentators have described the novel as 'lyrical', and if they mean it has a singing quality, I would agree—there is a high degree of tension in the language, sustained by a certain musicality. These characteristics were not really chosen by me—they're more a reflection of my particular sensibility.

KJ: You began in the book trade by working as a sales rep for New Press (around 1970). Did you ever get to meet Dave Godfrey and the others who were instrumental in starting that

Press? And, what was it like flogging Canadian literature to a nation that hadn't quite yet awakened to the energies of its own culture?

JB: Yes, I knew Godfrey, and became friends with his two partners in that enterprise, Roy MacSkimming and James Bacque. We published mainly non-fiction—our poetry and fiction lists were neither lengthy nor very strong. In the early 1970's, before the company got into deep financial difficulties, we had a lot of fun. We worked out of an old house in Toronto's Annex, and the place was a hive of energy and inventiveness. I was the company's only salesman, and I covered the entire country except for British Columbia and Alberta, which were covered by Scott McIntyre. I was only waking up to the possibilities of Canadian writing myself at that time—I have to admit I thought a lot of it was second rate. I suppose I was a bit of a snob about it. So lugging my cases of books down some frozen Saskatchewan street I was not inspired, really, by missionary zeal. It was just a job. When I had a moment to myself, I wasn't reading Dennis Lee or Al Purdy, I was reading Tolstoy and W.B. Yeats. It was only later that I discovered the gold in Canadian writing.

KJ: I note that father-figures such as Alf are important in the book and that mature, capable, and self-grounded people who show courage and individuality are valorized. Yet, the book also warns about the cost of losing such individuals in society. I know I'm making a leap between fact and fiction here, but do you think becoming a father influenced your perspective in writing?

JB: Yes, absolutely. Having children, if you have even a smidgin' of self-awareness, helps you see the world in a new way. You see why the future matters—why getting it right matters. You also discover you have much more in common with other people—particularly other parents—than you ever suspected. So you feel much more bound to your own society and culture than before. Questions of war or social policy or the environment become even more pressing.

For a writer I think this creates a leap of sympathy towards others. This can only be for the good.

KJ: You have mentioned that this book is partly based on the town of Paris, where you grew up. The Ancient Greeks used to believe that memory was integral to place and that one could generate detailed recollections by returning to a specific site. When you were writing the novel did you visit Paris while you were re-visiting the past?

JB: Yes, I did visit Paris while I was writing *The Island Walkers*, but it was to see family, not do research or gather inspiration. In fact, the present-day town of Paris seemed to have little to do with the Paris I was writing about—which

was the Paris I had discovered as a boy, wandering around town with my eyes wide open. In a certain way, the commanding viewpoint in the novel belongs to Jamie, the eight-year-old. He is looking at the town with a child's excitement, the almost visionary excitement of first discovery. The novel has a kind of blankly staring, bright, almost naive quality—and I think this comes from its origins in boyish memory.

KJ: Stephen Leacock's Mariposa, Margaret Laurence's Manawaka, and David Adams Richards' Miramichi, are all partly based on actual experience. Could you comment on the inter-mix of autobiography and historical past as it meshes with fiction to become story?

JB: This is an endlessly complex matter, with no final answers. Just to take one character, Alf. Physically, I think he somewhat resembles my own father. He also owes something to my paternal grandfather, who, like Alf, was a fixer of knitting machines, and a man of fiercely independent spirit. He also owes something to my observations of working men, from the time I myself worked summers in factories in Paris. Bannerman's mills in the novel are very like the Penman's mills I knew. Some of Alf's interior life is my own. Historically, he represents a certain aspect of the Canadian psyche, that always tries to find a compromise between extreme positions. In Alf's case, this attempt to square the circle leads to tragic results.

But all these things are really only starting points. The more Alf goes his own way as a character, inventing a destiny that is purely his own, the more fictional he becomes. Hopefully, this also means, the more real he becomes. This brings us back to the old paradox—fiction telling deeper truths than the so-called facts.

KJ: In your on-line M & S interview you state: "I think that literature, if it's to have any value at all, must have the courage for unhappiness. I've tried to be honest in following the Walkers to the bottom of their night. But at the same time, every good story dances its way through the shades, with all the sprightliness, poetry and music it can muster. The real hope is there, in the flame we make as we go out. I believe *The Island Walkers* is a happy book." There is something heroic about this dance through the shades—could you comment on the aspects of the human spirit that you touch in this book, and would you say the book itself is somehow a torch that you're passing on to the next generation?

JB: This is a very tough question, because it touches not just on my intentions, but my success in fulfilling them—a subject on which I am not to be trusted! Also, I am not really sure what the "human spirit" is. Is it what seeks to do good in the world? What seeks to survive? Is it

what is generous in us, or what seeks only our own well-being, at the expense of others? Certainly, the human spirit is not entirely a thing of goodness and light. I would say, rather, I was trying to show how we really are, under duress. And since I loved my characters, and loved the place where they live, I would have to add that I was envisioning them with love. But this love is not personal. It is more like a form of clarity without judgement, the clarity that is also a form of acceptance. If the novel is read by the next generation— and this is something all writers long for, but almost none achieve— I would hope it is because such love animates it.

KJ: Even though this novel is set in a southwestern Ontario mill town during the 1960s, it seems as much about the past, as about the future. One of the next-to-last scenes in the novel features a shut-down at the sweater mill. The scene is juxtaposed with one just before where Alf gazes through his workshop window at the nearby mill which he sees as a "carousel turning with a load of white bobbins." And then, he has a visionary experience: "Swiftly, swiftly, the pale planets fled against the deeper darkness of the hall behind it. Other machines were invisibly at work with a steady brushing clash, like a waterfall, as thousands of needles and small metal parts raced through their tasks, the deep, organic hum of the drive-belts." Alf feels himself separated from this world of surging industry and misses being part of the "easy purposefulness" of the mill-labourers. The scene seems very cinematic for me, yet it is also a vision of a world on the cusp, just before a wave of commercialization sweeps away an integrated sense of place and identity. Could you say something about the threads you see connecting past with future in this visionary viewpoint?

JB: I think humans always feel they are living through unparalleled change: this is what it means to live in the present, with all its existential anxieties. But we can see from looking at history, than some eras really are more transitional and insecure than others. Our own may be such an era, as global capitalism undermines older, slower, more locally rooted forms. *The Island Walkers* shows how international business can move into a community and turn it upside down, with little care about the results. But I think a close reading of the book will also show that this is not just a matter of "bad" big business versus innocent people. The industrial betrayal of the town has its counterpart in the betrayals of ordinary citizens, going about the private business of love and friendship. In other words, we can bray about "evil" polluters and businessmen and governments all we want, but the source of their sins is the human heart we all share. This is an eternal problem, that transcends the

particularities of any era. So I think the "threads connecting past with future" you speak of really come down to the ongoing challenge of the human race, to somehow evolve morally, in a way that will allow us to survive the consequences of our own greed, and of the technological inventiveness that gives it such frightening sway.

In Alf's visionary moment, he falls in love, so to speak, with the machines he used to tend. Perhaps he senses they are about to become a thing of the past, and him along with them. He is having a vision of how deep a part these machines are of the town— as organically a part of it, almost, as its hills and rivers. Perhaps, too, he is having a glimpse of human wholeness and belonging, that grail we are forever knocking out of our own reach.

KJ: The novel seems to have a strong cinematic quality. Could you say something about this filmic nature and what one might call your montage techniques which help to choreograph striking and sometimes ironic juxtapositions?

JB: I've already commented on filmic influences. Another model for my montage technique would be the plays of Shakespeare, with their swift scene changes and dramatic juxtapositions. I also love the verticality of Shakespeare— the sense he can give of an entire society being present, from top to bottom. Small town novels can do this, because the rich and the poor and the in-between must rub shoulders daily. I think because I wrote *The Island Walkers* rather late in life, I was trying to cram an entire world of experience and observation into it— both sexes, all ages, all social classes, all vices and virtues, the whole shooting match. Naturally, there is infinitely more left out than I could ever put in. But I think if you choose your elements carefully, you can create the impression of fulness. Ted Hughes has a phrase, "The Goddess of Complete Being." I definitely worshipped at her feet while writing *The Island Walkers*.

KJ: Is there something you'd like to say about the book that I haven't asked about?

JB: No.

KJ: Can you talk about any new projects you've got coming out?

JB: Well, I'm writing a new novel, set on a cottage lake in Northern Ontario. It's a love triangle, with social and environmental overtones, which sounds dauntingly earnest, I know. But I'm fascinated by the way our private lives, which often seem to be on a planet of their own, both determine and are shaped by larger patterns of change— by history really. There will be lots of sex, and some nice scenery. Our northern lakes- the whole mythology of summer holidays— play a critical part in Canadian life, but they haven't appeared much in our fiction.

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THE DROVER'S WIFE

An Excerpt from: *DAMAGE DONE BY THE STORM*

by Jack Hodgins

Damage done by the Storm (McClelland & Stewart) is Jack Hodgins' latest collection of short fiction. In this collection, the geographic range is wide – Australia, Germany, Ottawa, Edmonton, Mississippi and, the Vancouver Island logging and farming communities that feature in *Spit Delaney's Island* and other books by Jack Hodgins. The range of characters is equally wide, and many of these people are unforgettably larger than life. This remarkable collection of stories will renew the debate about the comparative excellence of Hodgins' novels and his short stories. *Rampike* is delighted to present Hodgins' story "The Drover's Wife" in this 25th anniversary issue.

For years she was known as Hard-hearted Hazel in the logging camps up and down the coast of British Columbia. She was also known as Hazel Haulback, Highball Hazel, and The Terror of the Woods. Government inspectors trembled at the thought of visiting her outfit. She had little time for critics. One civil servant found fault with her safety record and discovered how clumsy she could be while bringing his piping hot soup to the table. When a government forester arrived with plans for replacing her felled trees with tiny seedlings that would eventually become second-growth fir, she didn't let him off the dock. She blocked his way with her own substantial body and stared him down. When she learned that his name was Cyrus Drysdale, she let loose her fiercest Australian invective, and even though he insisted he was not related to the famous Aussie painter with that surname, she tilted him into the salt chuck. Subsequent inspectors sometimes wrote their reports without leaving their boats.

That my client has an enduring reputation in the Antipodes would be unknown to me still if I had not been thumbing through a library book and come upon a reproduction of Sir Russell Drysdale's painting titled *The Drover's Wife*. This famous image, depicting a large woman with a suitcase standing at the forefront of a flat barren landscape (the horizon broken only by a distant horse and wagon amongst a clutch of dead scraggly trees) was familiar to me during the dozen years I was married to an Australian and living in Katoomba. What struck me this time was the remarkable resemblance to the woman who'd recently become my client here in Victoria – that pretty face, those big bones, those sturdy legs. The accompanying text, a complaint by a certain Dr. Bail, insists that the woman was not the drover's wife at all, as the title of the painting

suggests, but his *own* wife. Further, this dentist accuses his wife of leaving him and their two children in order to run off with the owner of that horse and wagon. Noticing her physical resemblance to the accused woman, I thought it might be amusing to show the reproduction to my client.

She was not even slightly amused. She swore loudly, as she'd become accustomed to doing in the logging camps. "Bloody hell! That bastard kept me standing in the heat for hours while he fiddlearsed with his damn canvas. By the time he let me go, Danny-boy was ropeable. 'Who d'you think you are,' he says, 'the Queen of bloody Sheba? Get busy and start me tea!'" After studying the picture a little longer, she had some complaints of her own. "Where's the sweat on me neck? Where's the flies on me lip? Where's the bloody *sheep*?" Apparently this was the first time she'd seen the painting.

To me she admitted to feeling some sympathy for Dr. Bail, though she claimed he was never much of a dentist. In fact she blames him for the fact that she no longer has a tooth of her own in her head. "Comes from trusting an incompetent fool just because you married him!" She did not explain why she left him, however, or why she eventually left the drover as well, or how it was that she came to cross the Pacific.

I met Hazel when she called my business number, as do many seniors in this city when they've discovered a need for my services. Often it is the son or daughter of the elderly who calls for my help – a son or daughter living far away, that is – but in this case it was the eighty-seven-year-old woman herself who telephoned, having decided it was time to give up her townhouse and move to a seniors complex where, as she put it, "some other poor sod can cook my meals for a change."

My own mother was in her greatest need while I was half a world away in Katoomba. It nearly drove me crazy making arrangements from that distance – finding a good nursing home, investigating government agencies, finding someone to move her belongings and sell off the junk she no longer needed. After my marriage failed and I came home to Victoria, I discovered a large population of seniors living here, many of them having retired from elsewhere, leaving sons and daughters and all other relatives behind. It occurred to me that I might make a living doing for others what I wish someone had done for me. Thus “Rent-a-Rellie” was born.

Of course when Hazel first called me she did not admit to having “rellies” already. She certainly didn’t mention two daughters in Adelaide. In fact, she said she had no living family at all, but, to put it her way, she sure as shootin’ needed someone like me to find her a decent place to live, before she began to forget who the hell she was.

At first I didn’t realize who she was. That is, I didn’t know she was the Hazel Bailey of local legend until some time during one of our drives to visit retirement homes. At her advanced age, it is possible that half the people who pass her on the street, though aware of the story of her life in this province, would not know who they were looking at. That is, they would not recognize the woman who, half a lifetime ago, is believed to have appeared from “nowhere” and, after a long night of drinking at the Kick and Kill in the village of Port Annie, accompanied Shorty Maclean up past Desolation Sound to the little gyppo logging outfit he managed for a Vancouver company.

Rusted old equipment. Leaking shacks hanging at various angles over the sea. Shorty was felling trees off hillsides steeper than a doghouse roof. Giant firs came toppling to earth before Hazel’s eyes, as broad across the trunk as that drover’s wagon. When she ventured into the rain forest for the first time, brushing aside the boughs of hemlock and hanging swatches of old man’s beard, she felt, she said, like a flea in the hairy armpit of some stupendous beast.

For most new arrivals, the temptation is to marvel at these soaring giants, this green luxurious growth. But Hazel’s first thought, she told me, was to marvel at the amount of work there was to be done if this place was ever to look like the uncluttered flat approach to Ayers Rock. Cedar trunks blocked the view. Ferns and salal and Oregon grape grew up those sturdy

legs, it seemed, even as she stood looking. “A bloomin’ jungle from here to buggery,” she said, speaking as I am sure she would never have spoken as the wife of an Adelaide dentist. “Someone’s gotta clear this so’s a bloke can *see*.”

We don’t know how long it took before she saw that she herself was the someone who would eventually clear it all. At first she cooked for the bunkhouse men. She repaired the leaking roofs. In the evenings she also played a little poker. Within the year she’d scraped together enough winnings to buy a piece of the company – a large enough piece, apparently, to give her the power to serve Shorty Maclean his walking papers the first time he contradicted an order. Hazel ran the show her way. Nobody offered advice. She had discovered, she said, that it wasn’t the dentist that she’d been running from, or the drover, but the whole idea of letting someone else run the show. She’d always wanted to be the biggest thing in the picture. “He called it my silly streak,” she said, referring to the dentist. “But it was just that once in a while I forgot myself and behaved as though the world was meant for me to live in too.”

If she wanted to be the biggest thing in the picture, she saw that her opportunity had arrived. She also saw there was plenty of picture to fill. No one who needed the work dared to comment on her style of going about it, even when she took to chewing tobacco and spitting off to the side like the rest of the crew. She put on a great deal of weight, much of it muscle. If one of the men was sick, she set chokers or ran the yarding machine in his stead. The only times she wore a dress was when one or another of the boys was killed in a logging accident and she was obliged to attend – and sometimes conduct – the funeral.

She ran such a highball outfit that it – wasn’t long before she was making enough profit to start buying up other small companies working those woods. She was so surprised to have her orders obeyed by all these men, including tall Swedes who bragged of wrestling with grizzlies, that she got a little carried away with her power. She wanted to boss the whole coast.

She very nearly succeeded. By the time she’d become the owner of the third largest private timber company in the province, men in positions of authority were asking her to enter politics. She refused. There were still too many trees standing, too many places where you – couldn’t *see*. Once she’d got started, it seemed she couldn’t stop. Of course she never quite succeeded in making British Columbia look like the Nullarbor Plain, but she came about as close as it is possible to come. When Highball Hazel

and her boys had been through, whole mountainsides and valleys looked like the shaved scalps of lice-ridden kids. You could *see* all right, but never very far – mountains got in the way. And what you could see tended to look like a ravaged battlefield just after an invading army had gone through.

By the time she sold out to an American firm, she had discarded or worn out or otherwise outlasted three more men she referred to as her “de facto” husbands. She invested her fortune in the high-tech industries and wandered up and down the coast, one of the wealthiest people in the province, wondering what to do with the rest of her life. Checking the stock market daily was hardly enough for an active woman like her. “All I wanted was to carve me out a place where I could fit,” she said. She did not consider returning to Adelaide.

Her former acquaintances in Australia would probably be amused to learn that, after her retirement, she became a drover’s wife once again. A drover’s wife and a drover herself as well. She filled me in on a few details from this chapter of her life over lunch in the dining room of the Dogwood Manor. She has kept her true identity from the other residents, having registered with her birth name. “These old birds’d mess their Pampers if they knew who’s living amongst them. Hell, I reckon most of them have never even been in the same room as someone like me.”

One rainy afternoon during her period of purposeless life and indecision, she’d been once again sitting over a beer in the Kick and Kill with some old drinking buddies. “My foul mood wasn’t because of the rain, which I’d got used to, but because I’d gone and found myself thinking about those two girls I left in Adelaide.” She imagined them as mothers themselves by now, wondering whatever happened to the woman they only vaguely remembered. Did they wonder why she’d run off with the drover, or imagine that she had then run off with the man who’d painted her portrait that hot afternoon? She was on the verge of deciding to write the dentist for information about them when a man sat down across the table and waited for her to notice him.

She not only noticed him, she recognized him. This was the government reforester she’d tossed in the drink. Cyrus Drysdale.

His glare was as fierce as hers, and fuelled with as much dislike. He’d spent his lifetime planting seedlings to replace the trees

she’d been cutting down. He knew by now that he’d lost the battle, at least in this part of the world.

“Improved your breaststroke yet?” she said, remembering his frantic efforts to get back to his boat.

“I heard you’d given up,” he said.

When he could see that his choice of language was unfortunate (she’d clenched a fist), he rephrased it. “Retired, that is. Withdrawn your services from the industry that has brought so much wealth to this province.”

“And what have *you* got to show for your efforts?” she said.

He confessed he had very little to show. In *his* retirement he had become involved in the environmental movement. Poisonous chemicals were still being used to kill the wild underbrush that grew so fast that it choked off the seedlings, preventing them from becoming timber for future generations to fell. Poisonous chemicals were not, he said, environmentally sound. Fish died. Deer died. Herds of elk were dying. “Those, that is, that hadn’t already died when their habitats were ruined by people like yourself. If you’ll forgive my saying so.”

At first she pushed away and took her drink to another table and sat with her back to him. But it wasn’t in her to let someone else have the last word. After a few minutes she came back and sat across from Cyrus Drysdale again and said, “What do you mean – fish dying?”

“Maybe my brain was going a little soft,” she told me. “I found myself thinking again about my girls in South Australia. How would they feel if they heard their mother was responsible for the extinction of the magnificent elk?”

“Hell, Cyrus,” she eventually said, “this - shouldn’t be a problem for a couple of tough old crustaceans like us.” By this time she was talking like a true West Coaster.

They drank in silence for a few minutes, each searching the bottom of a beer glass for inspiration. When Hazel saw what could be an answer to the problem, a few more minutes passed while she considered whether to share it. He was, after all, her old enemy.

“I’ll go to my grave a failure,” Drysdale said. “Anyone travelling up this coast will see that I’ve wasted my life.”

It wasn’t pity that caused her to share her inspiration. It was the sudden recognition that she could be looking at a whole new way of making herself the biggest thing in the picture. If they made a success of it, she would contact those abandoned girls and make them proud of her.

"You're trying to get away from using chemicals on the woody-weeds?" she said. "One thing I learned during a life on another continent is that a certain dumb beast will chew just about anything right to the nub if you let 'em. The stupid merinos draggin' themselves around the dust down the Riverina would think they'd gone to heaven if they saw what we can offer! How many can we get our hands on fast?"

Cyrus Drysdale stared at her for a few minutes, trying to absorb what she'd told him. He had not realized until that moment, he later admitted to others, what a beautiful woman she was, despite her remarkable size. "And smart too. And, thank God, as stubborn as anyone's mule. Once she gets something into her head you couldn't stop her with a tank."

Within months they were partners operating a company that brought truckloads of sheep from farmers east of the Rocky Mountains and set them loose on the coastal mountainsides. A few months into their first season, Hazel and Cyrus were moving from mountain to mountain up and down the coast. They lived in a tent. You could come upon them around a bend in the road, or up the shadowy silence of some narrow inlet, camped on the edge of a clear-cut: two aging shepherds sitting inside their tent out of the rain, watching their flock nibble its way up slopes once scalped by Highball Hazel's outfit. Chewing the weeds so the planted seedlings could grow.

She claims she was happy as Cyrus Drysdale's companion. A journalist from the *Vancouver Sun* visited them long enough to take a photo for the Saturday second-front page. Hazel in her rain-gear stood mountainous amongst the stumps and seedlings, filling half the space, while Cyrus laboured to secure the tent pegs in the background. In the distance, sheep were chewing their way up a neighbouring canyon crowded with the tasty leaves of rapidly growing young alder.

By the end of the season, unfortunately, Hazel and Cyrus had not yet found a way to iron out a small glitch they'd discovered in their system: the task of teaching these animals the difference between weeds and future timber. They didn't know whether this defect was particular to the breed of sheep or common to the entire species. Expert animal trainers were called in, including one famous for his handling of Hollywood dogs. True success, it seemed, might depend upon someone developing a genetically altered breed of sheep allergic to evergreens. When most of the woolly beasts

were still resisting instruction a year later, the partnership began to suffer from the strain. Apparently people in the mountain town of Goat Leg speak even now of the evening in which the private tension between man and woman entered the public domain.

Naturally it began as a competition in blame. It was *her* fault for suggesting the sheep in the first place. It was *his* fault for being so eager to please her, just to gain access to her bed. It was undoubtedly *her* intention all along to draw him into a foolish scheme that would mock his efforts to save the environment. It was undoubtedly *his* intention from the beginning to make fools of the most important animal in her country of origin. "I should've bloody drowned you when I had the chance."

This was in Goat Leg's *Glorious Hangover Pub*. At five o'clock the place was crowded with local loggers, farmers, and tree-planters exchanging their own grumbled dissatisfactions through their smoke and fumes.

"You are a destroyer," Drysdale shouted. "You destroy forests, you destroy rules and laws, you destroy men. I believe those sheep are not real sheep at all." And here he spluttered a bit, trying to find the right words. "Those sheep are the evil servants of your wicked mind."

Men lined up at the telephone to invite wives and sweethearts down to witness what they sensed would be a battle worth recalling for their grandchildren. What had started out as a "holy row" was beginning to look like the run-up to a murder. "The poor little bastard don't have a snowball's chance."

The battle might have fizzled out before the wives and sweethearts had put on their lipstick if a local logger named Howie Black hadn't decided to out-shout the squabbling pair. Still nursing the bitter memory of being fired by Hazel Haulback fifteen years before ("I don't like your ugly face," she'd said. "Get it out of my sight before I alter it"), he was further insulted that she'd failed to recognize him seated at the nearest table. "Take your racket somewheres else," he said. "The pair of youse are curdling my beer." In the silence that followed, he added for the benefit of the room, "Oh, how the mighty have fallen, eh boys? From boss-lady over a bloody army of men she's gone to babysitting a herd of stupid sheep. Some people don't have no pride."

And here is where we must relinquish any doubts about Hazel's Australian origins, or her time as a dentist's companion. Her first husband could not have removed a half-dozen teeth any faster. When Howie Black's head snapped back

from the fist to his jaw, his front teeth dropped, one after another, tinkling, into several people's drinks. Once Black had been put out of commission, Hazel turned on Cyrus Drysdale with a sound her former countrymen would no doubt have recognized as an Aboriginal war cry and a tackle that had its choreographical roots in Australian Rules footie. No pub in Alice Springs is likely to have seen so many pieces of furniture broken in a single dust-up.

Eventually Hazel sold out to Cyrus Drysdale and, consistent with the pattern of her life, walked out on him. Drysdale tried to make a go of it, but eventually he gave up the business as well, selling to a pair of young entrepreneurs who were determined to make this environmentally friendly enterprise work. I understand this company is at present trying to find an inexpensive way of renting genuine Down Under sheep for a few months of each year. Perhaps they believe that sheep from the dusty plains of western New South Wales will be so overjoyed to see all that unfamiliar green, so grateful for the soft veined leaves of the new alders, that they will turn up their noses at the acidic needles of the tiny firs and hemlock.

When Hazel walked out on Drysdale, she did not, for a change, leave with another man. She moved down here to the capital city, and lived alone in her townhouse until – these several years later – she moved to the assisted care home I'd helped her to find. This elderly woman, sturdy enough even now, though weighing little more than half her former weight, was hard of hearing, dim of sight, and not too successful at hiding the tremor in her hands. Sitting across the dining-room table from her, I imagined her fellow residents would find it difficult to believe she'd once been known as Hard-hearted Hazel, The Terror of the Woods.

Perhaps she sensed my thought. She slapped a sudden hand on the table and lowered her voice to a growl. "I keep expecting that bugger to show up in here." By the way her gaze darted fiercely about, I assumed that "here" was this dining room, deserted by everyone but us.

"Sooner or later he's going to call and ask you to find him a place."

"And?" I said, knowing that "the bugger" would have to be Cyrus Drysdale. "You want me to take him elsewhere – right? There are lots of care homes in this city."

"Hell no, that's not what I meant!" she roared. "Bring him here! Just because I'm old - don't mean I've run out of steam." She lowered her voice, perhaps in case an administrator was hiding behind one of the pillars. "By now most of that land I cleared has grown up again with new timber, thanks to the seedlings he planted after my crew had gone through. I want to see the look on the son of a bitch's face when I tell him I'm thinking of busting outta here and taking up logging again, make a second fortune off them trees he planted. That oughta start a battle good enough to last till one of us is carted off to the morgue. What I can't stand is the thought of dyin' of boredom."

I might have thought that a woman with Hazel's memories was unlikely to die of boredom, but she was clearly a woman who needed to scheme and anticipate and carry out new conquests, even at this late stage of her life.

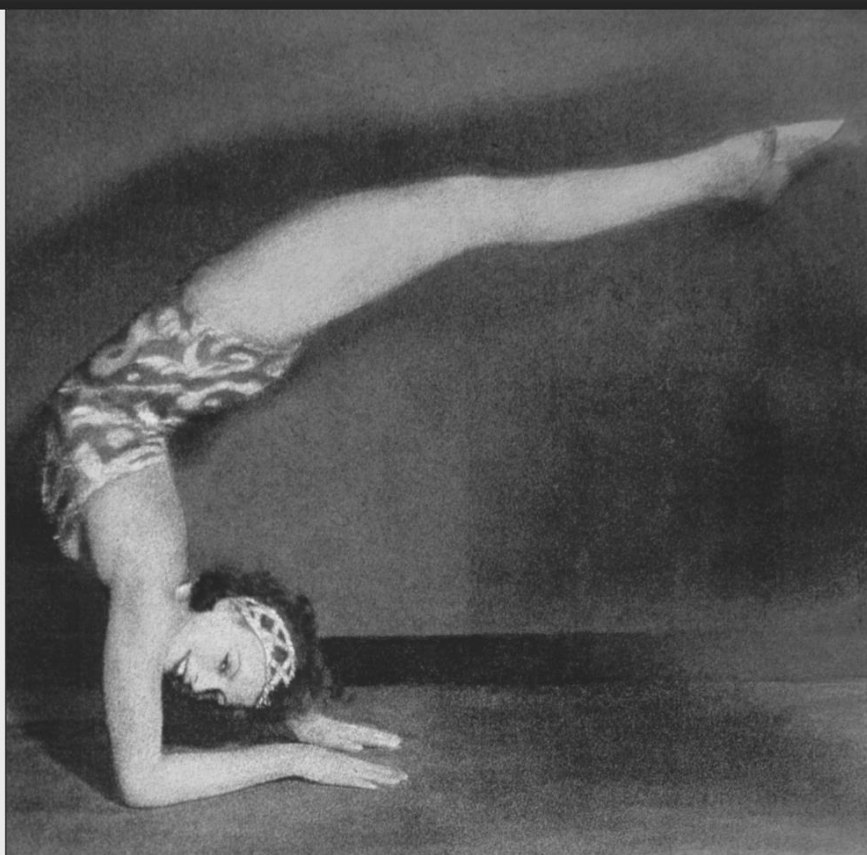
We may certainly feel sorry for the grief Hazel has caused Dr. Bail and the daughters she never got around to contacting, as well as for the mysterious drover she referred to as "Danny-boy." But if she is not the drover's wife, as Dr. Murray Bail insists, she can hardly be considered Bail's wife either, after all this time, nor the wife of several other men who once believed she belonged to them. Hazel has never belonged to anyone. I understand there is a good deal of sympathy in Australia for the figure Hazel cuts in the famous painting – an unhappy woman, dependent upon the wishes of a man while at the mercy of a harsh environment. Those who see in that young Hazel the symbol of a female victim would, I imagine, be heartened to learn that she succeeded in altering her destiny once she arrived on these shores. Look to the legs. She was never meant to be toppled.

**From *Damage Done by the Storm* by Jack Hodgins.
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A LITTLE FIRE IN THE DARK NIGHT

An Interview with Nino Ricci by Marty Gervais

Nino Ricci's first novel, Lives of the Saints, was an international hit in 1990. It occupied more than 75 weeks on the best-seller list in Canada. It also won him the Governor General's Award and the W.H. Smith/Books in Canada First Novel Award. It has since been published in over a dozen countries. That novel was followed by two more in the trilogy. His most recent novel is Testament, a work of fiction that brings a modern perspective to the greatest Biblical story of Jesus.

Nino Ricci was born in Leamington, Ontario, but his parents are from Italy. He finished his university studies in Toronto, Montreal, and Florence, Italy. He now lives in Toronto, where he writes full time. He is a past president of the Canadian Centre of International PEN, a writers' human rights organization that works for freedom of expression. Marty Gervais is the editor/publisher of Black Moss Press, now in its 35th year in the print trade. He is a photographer (whose exhibition "A Show of Hands" was presented recently at the Art Gallery of Windsor and published in book form). Gervais is a newspaper journalist with the Windsor Star, and the Resident Writing Professional with the University of Windsor Department of English.

MG: In those early days when you were sending out your manuscripts — specifically *Lives of the Saints* - to be published, and everything was coming back rejected, why did you continue? Why didn't you just pack it in?

NR: I suppose like many young writers I was arrogant enough to believe that I would one day get ahead. In any event, I had no real back-up, since there wasn't anything else I was particularly good at or inclined to do. Writing is perhaps unique among professions in that it seems virtually required that you go through your fair share of rejection early in your career if you expect to be able to hold you head up with any amount of dignity later on.

MG: You were born in Leamington, but grew up in an Italian family? How much of that European culture did you absorb? Did that cultural upbringing have any effect on your work as a writer? On your style, or approach to writing?

NR: I'm sure that if you had asked me when I was a child what aspects of my life were Italian, I would have said, the bad ones. Being Italian meant being an immigrant, being different, eating the wrong foods, wearing

hand-me-downs, sticking out. After my first trip to Italy at age twelve I began to see things a bit differently--I'd had no idea what a wondrous place Italy was, how beautiful and full of delights. Of course, it was more the tourist Italy I fell in love with then than the Italy my parents had come from; their villages really just confirmed my worst suspicions, that we'd always been backwards and marginal and poor. When I eventually came to write, however, it was clear that it was my parents' Italy, the world of peasants and forgotten mountain villages, that had had by far the strongest impact on me, since it was the one that kept coming up in my work. Despite my attempts as a child to reject all that stuff and my many attempts as an adult to somehow initiate myself into the mysteries of 'high' Italian culture--by spending a year in Florence, for instance—I remain a peasant to the core.

When I first started writing I experienced a similar desire to reject all that Italian stuff, all the storm and stress of being an immigrant. But I was stuck with it all, as it turned out; it was the material that had been given to me, and eventually I had to find the way to make use of it. I have always thought of that debt more in terms of content than style, since the majority of my literary influences, particularly

the formative ones, have been out of the English rather than the Italian tradition. But it has been pointed out to me that my tendency toward long, baroquely subordinated sentences may owe something to my Italian heritage.

MG: How much of the "autobiographical" impacts upon their work, even though it might be transformed into something fictional?

NR: I doubt "autobiography" as such really exists — anyone who is telling you the story of his or her life is already doing just that, telling a story, picking things, rearranging them, leaving other things out, much as is done in fiction. It seems almost moot then to try to find the dividing line between fiction and autobiography, since even things authors draw directly from life are inevitably so changed just by the act of transforming them from the chaos of life into the rigid structure of fiction that it becomes pointless to look for what is somehow 'true' in them. In my own case, I pillage liberally from my life whenever I can find anything in it that can help me work out a particular fictional situation. Usually I have no qualms about changing things to suit my needs, though on those occasions where I feel a certain loyalty to 'things as they actually happened' it is probably more in a kind of superstitious way than a metaphysical one, out the fear that I might somehow offend the informing spirit of an event if I try to alter it too radically.

MG: Writers talk about having found their "voice" or what Alistair MacLeod calls one's "fingerprints" on their work. In other words, the identifying element of the work that you can call your own. Do you know what that is with respect to your fiction?

NR: It seems to me there was a lot more talk about voice in the past than there is nowadays. I can remember feeling as a young writer that it was imperative to have a voice, to be readily recognizable, but I'm not sure I really do have a single distinctive voice or style, or even that I should. My style and tone have changed from book to book, partly, no doubt, from an inevitable evolution, partly

because different books have seemed to require different styles. I think you find this with many writers writing today--their books range so widely across different subject matter and perspectives that it would be odd for them to have a single recognizable voice. In the past--people like Hemingway, Saul Bellow, Mordecai Richler, Gertrude Stein come to mind--the big writers were the ones with the big voices, people you could pick up and recognize in a matter of sentences. But I'm not sure that fits our worldview anymore.

MG: Do you think telling a story from a child's point of view works for you? I'm thinking of the way you approach the story of *Lives of the Saints*.

NR: *Lives of the Saints* is nominally from a child's perspective, though there is clearly an adult narrator controlling things in the background. The sort of ironic tension that oscillation allows for was clearly something that worked for me, though I think I would be a lot less successful at working entirely from within the mind of a child, partly because I would feel somewhat claustrophobic. A child's point of view is very appealing, of course, because of the innocence of children, and the wonder with which they view the world, but I would be afraid of floating off into earnestness without the anchor of a cynical adult in the background.

MG: Can you cite the influences in your work? Perhaps the writers you read as a kid? Mentors?

NR: I have had many influences, probably everyone I've ever read, though the most formative ones were likely those I was exposed to as a young adult. Oddly, I wasn't reading a lot of fiction then--at university I tended to take poetry rather than novel courses, to cut down on my reading load. As a result I'd have to list people like Yeats and Eliot as important influences, and maybe even Alexander Pope. Probably one of my greatest influences, though it took some hard slogging for me to reach to point of understanding the scope of him, was Shakespeare; a few other important ones would be Dostoyevsky,

Nabokov, Virginia Woolf, Alice Munro, Thomas Pynchon, and Don DeLillo. I read quite a bit as a child but I'm not sure I can cite any of the books I read then as big influences, except insofar as they made me aware of the strange and utterly gratis world of the imagination.

MG: What happens after you write a successful book? Are you left paralyzed in trying to match that success with the next book?

NR: It's true that success can exert a deforming pressure, and there are probably few people who are exempt from that. But for most writers, success is a fairly muted thing--you still end up alone, in a room, full of doubt, whether your last book has been successful or not. Given that most of the markers of literary success--and this would include not only sales, which are entirely unreliable as any indicator of quality, but also prizes, reviews, all the noise of literary opinion — have little bearing on true worth, the important thing is to keep focused on your work. I can't say I have ever felt paralyzed by success—successes are a gift of the gods, really, a combination of luck, good timing, and, occasionally, talent, and I feel fortunate to have had one or two, since they have allowed me to keep writing.

MG: When did you know you wanted to be a writer? Or did you want something else or envision something else in your life?

NR: The idea of being a writer came to me at a fairly young age, probably when I was ten or eleven, partly because I used to read a lot, and figured somebody had to be writing all those books, and partly because writing was something that came naturally to me and that I enjoyed doing. There were other things I wanted to be--an NHL hockey player, a movie star, and, when I was quite young, a priest--but none of them turned out to be things I had any talent at.

MG: Did education serve you well? Did you take creative writing courses at high school or university?

NR: I can't say I got a great education as a child--it would have been nice if someone other than my geeky high school friend Rob had mentioned *Anna Karenina* to me, say, back when I was wasting most of my evenings watching *Bonanza* or hanging out at the arcade. But I was fortunate to have had a number of very good English teachers through my youth, who taught me useful things like how to parse a sentence and who actually encouraged me in my writing. At university I was initially not especially encouraged in my writing—I was effectively thrown out of the first creative course I enrolled in, by no lesser an eminence than the venerable W. O. Mitchell—but I did finally discover real literature, which probably proved more useful to me in the end than the couple of creative writing courses I was eventually allowed to finish.

MG: How disciplined are you when it comes to writing schedules? Do you follow a particular routine?

NR: Currently, balancing child care and other obligations, I try to write four days a week, six or seven hours a day. I treat my writing as a job, which is what it is. My wife is also a writer, and we essentially live off our writing, so if we didn't follow a routine we'd be in trouble.

MG: Do you write long hand initially and transfer this to a computer? Or do you work on the computer? And more importantly, does the choice of how your work impact upon the rhythm, or pace, of your writing?

NR: I wrote my last novel (*Testament*) straight on the computer, and didn't really like that--I found the editing function kicked in too soon, and I was spending too much of my time revising over and over again the same thirty pages. With my first three novels I wrote a first draft by hand before switching to other technologies, and I've gone back to that system for my present novel. I find it much more effective. It is a lot easier to let yourself go when you are writing by hand, since you can't go back and re-edit every line. I think

I probably end up with greater continuity that way; it is also much easier to go back and edit when you have an entire draft in front of you and have a sense of the shape of the whole. There is also something about the look of a handwritten page that is gratifying: every day I look over at my big stack of scribbled manuscript, and feel warmed.

MG: Some writers plot out their work like a military battle - and I don't particularly agree with that. Others allow for "surprises" in their writing, and by that, I mean surprises to them in the way a story might suddenly veer in a direction never envisioned. What about yourself? Do you let the story lead you into such adventures?

NR: I generally have a sense of the overall shape of a novel before I start it, and then let the first draft serve essentially as an outline, a place for figuring out what is going to work and what isn't. In this process the overall shape seldom changes, but almost all of the details do. All sorts of things come up that I hadn't foreseen; some of these become seminal. Meanwhile, pet ideas or scenes that I have been plotting out for years in my head suddenly feel superfluous.

MG: Where did the idea spring from for *Testament*?

NR: I had been thinking about *Testament* for many years before I actually got around to writing it. The idea probably sprang initially from my own grapplings with Christianity as a boy and from my attempts as a young adult to make sense of Jesus outside the context of Christian belief. The reason the subject appealed so strongly to me as a novelist, I suppose, was not only because of the powerful narrative possibilities the Jesus tradition offers up but because there seemed a good chance with this sort of material that my own personal obsessions might actually have a larger cultural relevance, given the fairly central role Jesus has played in human history.

MG: I understand you visited the Holy Land when you wrote this book. How much research do you do for a book, and how does it play out in the final manuscript?

NR: I spent about six months doing research before I actually wrote anything, enough to reach a point where I felt I could launch into the material with some degree of authority. About three months into my first draft, I travelled to Israel, a trip I had been planning from the outset but which I wanted to delay until I had a better sense of what I needed to know. That trip proved pivotal for the book--I had felt bogged down until then, and a bit unsure, but actually visiting the sites of the Holy Land brought the world of Jesus home to me in a fairly visceral way.

I continued doing research throughout the writing of the book, usually on a need-to-know basis. I find it is dangerous to do too much research; you end by feeling overwhelmed by fact. With this particular subject I was helped a bit by the fact that not that much is known, ultimately, about Jesus and the world he lived in, since that was not a part of the world about which much historical documentation has survived.

MG: You say you had wanted to be a priest when you were young? Are you still religious to some extent? Or not at all?

NR: Issues of spirituality and faith come up in all my works, though I myself do not consider myself a member of any faith. It would be accurate to call me an agnostic; I believe we live in a state of profound ignorance. I suppose in my fiction I try to kindle a little fire in the dark night of that ignorance.

MG: Finally, what are working on now? Or are you superstitious and prefer not to talk about it?

NR: I am working on a novel set in the 1980s in Montreal, loosely based on four years I spent there.

FIELDING QUESTIONS

an interview with Dennis Cooley by rob mclennan

Dennis Cooley's poetics are inspired by the Black Mountain school of poetry. He teaches Canadian and American Literature and Literary Theory at St. John's College, University of Manitoba. Cooley served as Assistant Editor on the Journal of Canadian Fiction, was the founding editor of Turnstone Press, poetry editor of Arts Manitoba, contributing editor to Border Crossings, and editor at Pachyderm Press. Cooley is a driving force in Prairie and Canadian literature. In this interview he discusses his theory and stylistics with rob mclennan.

rm: Probably the easiest question to start with, what brought about the reissue of Jack with University of Alberta Press?

DC: I saw an advertisement from U of A Press indicating that they were re-publishing out-of-print books in a series they had recently established, and I knew that they had brought out some Kroetsch titles, and were doing some more. Some Sinclair Ross ones, some others. There were others too, but news about those books caught my eye and I found an address through David Carr, who is at the University of Manitoba Press. I asked him if he knew who I might approach and he gave me the name of Mary Mahoney-Robson. I wrote her (this would have been very early in 2000), wondering if U o f A might be interested. Leslie Vermeer wrote back saying yes, send us the book, and several months later they said yes, we'd like to do a reissue of BJ. Right from the start they were willing to consider all kinds of options, including my idea of adding, deleting, and rearranging material. When I was doing the first edition in the early 80s a lot of material didn't make it in for various reasons, and I had done a bit of doodling on related material since. I had written an enormous stack of notes for "cunning linguist" and my intention for the second edition was to replace those entire sections with completely new material. That didn't happen, mainly because I lost track of what I had and the material-pages and pages of notes, pages and pages of early versions, intermediate versions, revised versions, conflated texts-got terribly jumbled and messed until I didn't know where anything was and so, running out of time and energy, I decided in the end to rework the stuff that was there. I might have added an entirely new section of "cunning" pieces though, I can't remember clearly now. But I was excited to be able to revisit the book and to fiddle with it. Leslie Vermeer had said that if I looked after the keyboarding they probably could accommodate an expanded text and that's what I resolved to do from the start. It's almost unheard of, a second

edition of poetry, and I leapt at the chance to dicker with the first edition.

rm: Why was it important for you to go through the process of *Bloody Jack* again? What was it about the text that made it unfinished? There are stories of Irving Layton going back and reworking poems that have already been published, but most writers tend to leave pieces alone once they've entered into print.

DC: Everything. Everything was unfinished. It always is. I remember when I was an undergraduate at the university of Saskatchewan, studying English in the sixties. I loved it, it was heady and exciting reading all that wild stuff. But I remember at one point being outraged at something I found. W.H. Auden (who by the way seems to me to be wrongly set aside these days)-he was the one. He said-and I remember this moment with clarity, the moment when I read this-he said a poem is never finished, it is only abandoned. I took that, then, to be an excuse for laziness, or slovenliness. I've seen since that I read the statement with naive indignation. I've since come to realize, now that I am a lot wiser about everything, what he was saying. I may never have quite appreciated this if I hadn't landed by happy accident into writing. Or if I hadn't fallen into another evil: postmodernism. either way you cut it-in the practice of writing, or in the theory of language (the one that I find most compelling that is)-you never can 'finish' a poem, if by 'finish' you mean complete, once and for all, at a point of perfection or at least at some point of ultimate achievement beyond which you cannot possibly go. I've come over many years to think of the poem as something that is far more open and unrealized, immune to completion and resistant to perfection. I work like crazy trying to shine them up, mulling them over, making notes, revising, deleting, amending (I amend a lot, mend the breaks). In the sense of polishing I do believe in 'finish,' as in making poems 'shine' if I can. But they're never finished, as in done, full

and complete, totally sufficient. So, personally, I never feel totally satisfied with what I have written, or convinced that it cannot be improved, or at least altered, and I feel no equanimity about rewriting material. I do it all the time. But I realize, too, or think I do, that the sense of the poem as a done deed, a text that need not or that can not be changed, was something that doesn't make a lot of sense to me intellectually. Finality as a literary virtue is not what I believe in or wish for, finally. The word is too much a fine and finite thing. what I am saying may seem to affront a sense of historicity, and to represent an erasing or a devaluing of 'what really happened.' I remember many years ago Dorothy Livesay's inveighing against Earle Birney's reworking of some of his early poetry. This would have been about 1975 or so, her complaint that is. It was misrepresenting the poetry, she said, it was seeking to alter the record. It was lying about history. I never found it easy to disagree (though I often did) with Dorothy, who was strong-willed and tough, but I summoned a modest demurrer. Why would you think so? I said. The record is there, the poems as they earlier appeared enjoy their continued lives, as they were then published. (As they were then, are now, and ever shall be. word without and.) Why can't Birney have another go at them, they're his poems?

I still believe this: the poems are there in their stages and they are available to anyone who would wish to find them. To argue against that move is to deny a writer any chance of 'improving' texts or of bringing them into new possibilities. even if you left the texts 'as they are,' they still in crucial ways are not 'what they are [or were].' even 'fixed' words come unfixed in reading-from person to person, from time to time. Why not accept that unfixing in the rewriting as well as the rereading? It's a strange idea, isn't it, that once words get into a book they're frozen forever. There isn't quite the same felt constraint for periodical publication, is there? And certainly not for earlier stages of poems in manuscript. But why should the first book publication cut off the words from further unfoldings? Why should the poem cease to change? It's a superstition I think, some notion that the book is sacred in its finality.

In any case, I had a lot of material lying around from the first go at *Bloody Jack*, and had written a few things since. I jumped at the chance to get the book back into print, but also to revisit it, re-imagine it. I was really pleased to have that chance. What else could become of this? What potential is there to be followed, what energies and soundings to be let loose? What tunings to make? What can you tease out? What history of the text's reception might you be tempted to tuck in? Who would want to foreclose on any of that? I

am so given to molestation of language I couldn't keep my hands off the poems, wouldn't leave them alone.

rm: The open-endedness idea is far from a new one, writing poems that refuse to close, or end, that Bowering, Wah, Nichol etcetera picked up from Robin Blaser, Jack Spicer, et al. The series of closings in *Bloody Jack*, for example, that you leave the reader to choose from. It's something I adhere to as well, how every step you take is a further opening. Is this process of ongoing revision the reason why your books are (usually) so far between? I know that at one point, the manuscript that became the 142-page *Seeing Red* (Turnstone Press, 2003) was hundreds of pages long, with fractions appearing as the chapbook *Burglar of Blood* (Pachyderm, 1990) and in your selected, *Sunfall* (Anansi, 2000). Even your sequence, *Love in a Dry Land*, has appeared only in teasers, in your selected and beyond, for quite some time. How difficult is it to send a (so called) finished book out into the world?

DC: I enjoy working in sequence, I find it productive, the poems just keep coming. And I like that experience, I love writing. So much of the time I'm adding and revising-what potential can I tap, what re-tune? I'm drafting, making notes, and the manuscripts get bigger and bigger. As long as that is happening I don't want to abandon the writing or cut it off. This goes on often for years. Irene began in 1990 and appeared in 2002, *Seeing Red* began in 1989 and appeared in 2003, *love in a dry land* began in 1989 and I'm still at it in 2004, hundreds of pages later. That and the terrible scatter of notes and versions. I have them all over the place and it's a struggle to find and compare them, see what I've got: what's the latest version, what other versions do I have, what notes, what have I used where? Right now I'm making an effort to sort through what I have and put it into some kind of shape. So there's that. Keeping track is a problem. The house-keeping is a big job. That and my obsessive revising. I come back to texts again and again, tinkering and tuning, there's always something. It gets to the point that I'm not sure I've got anything better when I make changes. It's different, but whether it's any better I'm not always sure. I tend to complicate the text in revision and I sometimes worry that it loses power because of that.

There's also for me the reality of publishing. I find it hard to get a book of poems accepted I've had manuscripts lying around with presses for 5 or 6 years, even when they are invited, until I just give up on the presses. I think it's a bit odd that they should do that, but I also

understand the difficulty that presses face. I should, I myself am involved with one (Turnstone, to which I have recently returned). They have a hard time selling poetry and when they find themselves squeezed, as they often do, the first thing to suffer is poetry. It gets published less often, promoted less extensively, held in production for longer periods. These days even the literary presses are more and more susceptible to the market place. Let's face it -- poetry doesn't sell. Irene in its various stages got turned down by three presses before it came out. So the second part of the answer is simple: the timing, and even the occasion, is pretty much out of my hands. And so I'm grateful if a press, any press, wants to do any of the work, whenever they might want to do it, or be able to do it. I don't think a poet can count on much more than that these days.

I'm generally busy too. I write a lot of letters. I carry a pretty demanding load in an English department, I teach full-time, edit manuscripts for others, and I give talks and write essays, conduct workshops, do a lot of work on conferences and with guest writers. I keep journals and compile bibliographies. I also supervise quite a few graduate students, students call on me a lot, old and new; and this takes more time and energy than a person might suppose. I travel quite a bit too, doing these things. Much of this is going on at the same time; I'll have 5 or 6 projects actively on the go. Right now, for instance, there are 4 or 5 journals in advanced stages, hundreds of pages there; a long set of metapoems and muse poems (about 250 pages); a bunch of essays (300 pages or so); love in a dry land (approaching 700 pages); another 800 pages or so of poems; a couple of other book-long series lying around or under development. And then there are the essays and statements. I love doing them, and there are hundreds of pages there. It's just ridiculous: there must be something like 3000 pages of developed writing, and I don't really know where I might take it or what to do with it. Finally (if there is a finally) I'm a put-offer. I've put off telling you this, but I am, I'm that all right. I work hard but all the time I'm perennially the last person to get in an essay or a submission. The late Dennis Cooley.

rm: Even with the amount of unpublished work you're currently working on, is the revisiting (and revising) an already published work something you would do again, or was *Bloody Jack* an exception? Are there other pieces or books of yours you would like to go back to?

DC: Not particularly. Most of them seem to me to have receded somewhere into the distance, where I can see them only dimly, and I have no great

desire to go out looking for them. They are not on-going in my writing life. I'd find it hard to whip up much enthusiasm to rework those books now. There are lots of little things I wouldn't mind changing, but on the whole I'm not tempted. What I would be interested in diddling with is passwords, a postmodern journal based on a summer I spent in Germany in 1990. It was an accretion to begin with, the result of many passes, giving it a foreknowledge that I liked, and a layering that pleased me. Since it was by its nature additive (apart from the chronology of its entries), and metalingual, it has lent itself to revisitation. I actually did redo the published form once. In manuscript it must have gone through 7 or 8 versions and thousands of small changes. Mostly the changes were interpolations, tucking in stuff that I thought might work. It was published in 1996 and then in a second edition in 2000. I'd be pretty happy to see it appear in a new edition. I am hoping something like this might happen because it was produced only in small runs by a small publisher in Germany and only a handful of copies have shown up in Canada, so it's pretty much unknown here. I've since kept several journals based on trips to Europe and I have retouched them now and then, most conspicuously and most ambitiously on a trip in '95 to Portugal for a poetry festival in Coimbra. I'd welcome an excuse to re-enter the journals if I could find a publisher for any of them. I'm intrigued by the idea of doctoring journals, and turning supposed texts of reporting into opportunities to wonder about the journal itself, and to take it in unseemly inappropriate directions. But I've also brought other material through stages and revisions: the Dracula material, the love in a dry land material, the Irene material. I am interested in returning to one or two of them in a new way. My daughter Dana, who is a video artist, and I have for years been planning to do a CD or DVD based on *Fielding*. It would be a mix of photographs and video - all kinds of visuals - and (this is my hope) music composed for the project. Michael Matthews, a Winnipeg-based composer, who has set some of my writing in the past, has indicated an interest in joining us. So, I'm hoping this will happen. Years ago Murray Schafer had mentioned his interest in doing *Fielding* as a soundscape, but we never got around to pursuing the idea, and here it is again, close to happening. And then there is another return to *Bloody Jack*. The musician, Lawrence Ritchie, who contributed some scores to the first edition of *Blood Jack*, and a few more to the second, has been working toward a collaboration we have both years ago agreed to do, a musical of *Bloody Jack*. He's done a lot more work

toward this, but I'm not sure where we are at the moment, since I'm tied up in classes and he has been ill.

rm: *Passwords* is a fun book, with its mix of prose and poetry (almost an utaniki, as Wah and Nichol have done), and at 288 pages, there's a lot of material. The back cover refers to it as a "biotext." To me, it seems as though you are constantly writing, and make little or no distinction between writing and living. How accurate would you consider that?

DC: At times I'd say it's dead on, especially in that text, which is so reflexive and so given to the metalingual. That metaphor, the world as language, pretty obviously lends itself to something like a fusion, or rather the suggestion of a fusion, between "writing" and "living." I do that a lot-write the world as written. The metaphor is there so strongly in poststructuralism anyway, isn't it? There's that wonderful expression of Roland Barthes' in which he says we're faced with a world that is "déjà lu." It's attractive, the linguistic metaphor, in reading land as language say, because it mediates between claims for referentiality in language and claims, which are no less certain or vociferous, about the impossibility of embodying the world in words-in a word it ain't there. For me, the shoreline is really interesting, it's there you pick off the seeds from inland and it's there you snag the stuff from the water. (Turnstone, the press with which I have been involved, is named after a migratory bird whose niche is the edges of water.) Hybrid, some would say, or did say not so many years ago. Mongrel's probably the word, at least for a prairie poet. But that's where I find myself so much of the time-seeking a verbal connection with the world and realizing that whatever loops we throw out, we will be holding on to the rope itself, beholden to the fabric. There's its shape as it has been tugged and twisted already, long before any of us ever picked it up and gave it a twirl.

I realize that the move I'm trying is hardly air-tight intellectually, if one wants those things to be pure and sealed against spoilage. But, hey, I write dirty stuff. As I said once to bp Nichol, words do refer; they do so only provisionally or partially or inadequately, and they will be always under construction, under dispute, but they do point out there, somewhere. And as I have said on more than one occasion, when attacked as an 'academic,' or worse, words are answerable to their own making too, their own determined trajectories and their own loud and quiet conversations. In this I'm some mix of Walter Ong and Roland Barthes, both heroes of mine.

I guess I'd say this, too, about passwords. The figure in it is thrown into uncertainty at every turn, unable to speak the language (German), unfamiliar with the cultural codes, homesick, bewildered and lost by the hour. He's astonished too by what he blunders into. Not to mention humbled. He's dumped into an endless series of misadventures in language and confusion over an endless barrage of codes. That is the story of his trip: his need to negotiate with languages that he doesn't understand. He's in crises all the time, often comical in ineptitude, but in that position all the same. The perfect occasion for a metalingual report. And that's what I wrote. I'd never planned that. I'd intended to keep a journal and to do it in such a way that I could use it as a public document, which means there is a lot of erasure there, many things I wouldn't have dared say. But I found, increasingly, that the story was a metalingual one. There are also many texts which carry that life strongly into a public space-the elegies for my mother and for my father being two of the more obvious instances.

But, listen, everybody does something like this. We all are engaged in writing our lives, all the time. Forget the high-powered arguments about this (though they hold, I'm sure). But in the most basic and obvious ways this is true. We tell about what happened at work, we talk to ourselves, tell ourselves what we should have said when some prick was abusing our dog, rehearse what we will say when our kid gets home, imagine how we might speak when a charity calls, admire or envy the way someone has spoken about being hard-up, store up a good phrase we heard at the pub, save it for the right occasion. Whatever. We write and rewrite our lives all the time. We're in constant rehearsal. What is it to be in love? We've got an idea-we've read a few books, seen a few movies-and we ourselves have a go at the script. And then, more generally, I'd say, yes, I am constantly writing, and that activity is a defining one for me, is central to my life.

rm: That brings me to my next question, about the books you wrote on each of your parents -- *Fielding* (Thistledown, 1983), and *Irene* (Turnstone, 2002). How difficult a process was each book, and can they even be compared?

DC: They weren't difficult to write, they are difficult to read, for me I mean. My parents died a little over 10 years apart-my dad early in 1980 and my mom at the very end of 1990, but the books are almost 20 years apart. The one about my dad, *Fielding*, was a lot less time in writing, a couple of years or so, and it's a lot more

narrative. It was composed and it is set in several major parts, one section written before my dad's death (a memory section), then a section that goes from Winnipeg to Regina, where my dad was in hospital; another from Regina to Estevan; one from Estevan to Winnipeg; and then a dream piece that happens over a year and a half later. *Fielding* follows the triangle of the trip in 1980 and most of the book is written in movement between places. It reads landscape, the winter landscape, as emblem of what happens. *Irene* consists of many more short pieces, perhaps because my mother didn't die so suddenly as my dad, and the experience was not so dramatically compressed into a few days, marked so clearly by a distinct journey or a single season. And partly because the book was not accepted for publication for years and so I kept on working with it—adding here, moving there, deleting this, finding a new turn on another page.

But in neither case was the writing difficult, not as I recall at least. Not difficult technically, I think, and not in being unable to find words. It was in many ways a welcome experience for me. I think maybe because it allowed me some release into the writing. I mean the books are sites of mourning, they were deeply emotional for me. Still are. I seldom read from them, even now, all these years later, because of the force they have for me. The most I can do is little parts from them, tucked in among other poems. I enormously loved my parents, and I thought that in ways their lives were cheated, and it was painful to have them die. But the actual writing I found almost welcoming. It was as if I were homing and I even felt a kind of pleasure in the writing, I really did. It probably sounds odd, perverse even, but it had that effect for me, coming into words for what was happening. As I think of it now, I'd say it was a mix of compulsion and satisfaction, I needed and wanted to write those books. There's a note in *Irene* that says something like this: I wrote this because I wanted to talk to myself, I needed to tell myself what it was to lose my mother. I didn't want my mother to slip away, and I wanted her to be somewhere more than in memory. And because I wanted to tell someone, but I am not sure what it is I need to say or why I want to tell you. It was a bit like being received into a room where I could sink into thought, alone, which I guess is what was happening actually in the physical act of writing those books. It might be wrong somehow, entering writing like that, and I sometimes feel I should never have published those books, or at least parts of them, but on the whole it feels right that I did them.

It's the nature of elegies, isn't it?

Ostensibly they are about and for the person who is mourned, but in a crucial and unavoidable way they are about those who write them, and for them too. Do you know the Richard Wilbur poem, "Elegy"? It's maybe the best elegy ever written, and it's just one line: Who would I show it to? That's just staggering I think, that line.

But how I handle personal and emotional texts: reluctance to read those poems in public, cause when I do I usually get myself into a tough spot and botch the poem, and make everyone embarrassed and myself inept. So I mostly read comical stuff and vernacular stuff, which I like doing anyway, and which usually is well received by audiences, though some of the hip folks who are into language poetry seem not to be much amused by them. One of the results is that those who know my stuff only from readings have little inkling that that other stuff is there too.

Another thing about *Irene*, its being written during a period of over ten years (not nonstop—I was doing other things too), was that it picked up a little more resonance with other texts as I began to see what I had, the literary implications of it. There is a poem in the book in which I say, startled, I've just realized I've been telling the Persephone story and I didn't even know it. That piece came years after my mother died and years into the writing of the book. But with both of the books I was aware that I was writing an elegy and I wrote with that knowledge. These are the two most sustainedly personal books I've done, personal in an intimate sense I guess I mean. I think of them as being remarkably linked, more so probably than they actually are. You lose one parent and you are stricken, you lose another parent and you are stricken all over again. What is the language of that loss?

And yet there are differences, probably, greater differences than I see because of my personal connections to my mother and my father. David Arnason has written that *Fielding* is more angry, rawer, and I think probably he is right. Karen Clavelle, who has just done a monograph on my writing (it's yet to appear), says that *Irene* is more accomplished, and I suspect she's right too. (It's certainly more textured.) I say that even though I'm generally inclined to think that after a writer learns most of the important things about writing, the writer doesn't necessarily improve, s/he simply writes different things, and to a great extent pretty much the same things. I don't know if that holds for the two elegies, or for the other titles, but on most days I'm tempted by the claim.

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AN EXCERPT FROM: *CLAIRE'S HEAD*

by Catherine Bush

Rampike is pleased to present this excerpt from Catherine Bush's novel, Claire's Head, (McClelland & Stewart) a psychological mystery depicting the inner world of a migraineur's suffering. Claire Barber, a Toronto cartographer, receives a phone about the disappearance of Rachel, her older sister, a freelance medical journalist living in New York. Numerous questions remain unanswered – including whether Rachel is in hiding, or is she still recoiling from the death of her parents. Troubling questions arise concern the status of Allison, Rachel's six-year-old daughter. Claire experiences a series of extreme migraines in her quest for the truth as the mystery of her lost sibling deepens.

In Amsterdam everyone was talking, in excellent English, about soccer. The taxi driver who picked up Claire and her bags at Schiphol was lamenting the heartbreaking loss of the Dutch team to the Italians in the Euro 2000 semifinals the week before and admitting to the bittersweet pleasure of watching the Italians go down to defeat at the hands of the French in the final four days past. All the games had been played in Dutch and Belgian stadiums. The city, as they entered it, was still festooned with orange bunting, the Dutch team's colour. Without prompting, the young, bespectacled man at the reception desk of the Ambassade Hotel regaled Claire with stories of the night the Dutch had routed the Yugoslavs, and their brilliant playing against the Danes. Those nights, there was dancing in the streets and on the bridges over the canals, and young girls and their grandmothers bicycled safely home under a full moon at 3 a.m. All the way up the five narrow and neck-breakingly steep flights of stairs to her sloping attic room, the bellhop talked of nothing but Overmars and Kluivert, the grace of Overmars, the swiftness of Kluivert, until Claire was nearly dizzy. The room struck her as instantly familiar, a mere three paces wide – as diminutive as the rooms in her house in Toronto, which helped ground the part of her that wondered what in heaven's name she was doing here.

The glass in the windows at the front of the room was old, and moved, not quite solid. It had been falling slowly, perhaps for centuries, within its pane, which distorted its translucency and the view ever so slightly. Single-paned, the window opened with a clatter upon a scene that could not have made Claire happier. She was high above one of the city's canals. Steep rooftops, staggered like steps, rose across from her,

some with hooks projecting beneath the eaves from which ropes and pulleys hauled goods that would not fit through the narrow doors, but only through the wide frames of the windows.

It was Thursday morning. She was to meet Ariel, the healer, the next day. Until then, she was on her own. Jet-lagged, drugged, she lay down on the bed, on its gold chenille spread, above a royal purple carpet, and listened to the sounds of the street rising up from below. The whirr and rattle of bicycles, the ping of their bells. The bleating of moorhens or – she couldn't yet tell which – the squeaking of boats, and ropes, against their moorings. The sounds that said Amsterdam, that made it clear she was not in Toronto or New York.

It had been a month, four days ago exactly a month, since Brad Arnarson had first called her.

Once before, she'd come to Amsterdam, a brief stopover in the middle of her rite-of-passage backpacking tour through Europe at twenty-one. She and Gabrielle Rosen, a fellow cartography student from Windsor, Ontario, had arrived late at night on a Sunday train from Bruges, hungry and grimy and confident they'd have no trouble finding a room, an affordable room, only to discover the city booked up. From a phone booth by the information kiosk in the railway station they kept calling, with increasing desperation, hotel after budget hotel until they managed at last to snare, not an expensive room, but one already beyond their means, with floor-length red velvet curtains that drifted down from somewhere near the ceiling and a double mattress that sank into such a valley that there was nothing they could do to stop themselves from toppling towards each other all night. Two sweaty girls in their underwear. They barely slept for laughing. The next day they moved into a hostel and spent the evening stumbling wide-eyed through the red--

light district. Yet Claire had no sense then of this being a city of canals, a city built on water.

Once the drugs had kicked in and her head began to clear, she roused herself. She scanned the street map of Amsterdam, which the hotel had provided, then folded it into her shoulder bag. With luck, given her ability to orient herself visually, even in places she'd never been before, and her knack for not getting lost (only London, once, with its ancient curlicues of streets, had got the better of her), she wouldn't need the map again.

Outside the hotel, she turned right and walked a little way beside the waters of the Herengracht until she came to the intersection of Oude Spiegelstraat, on her right, and, running left, over a little bridge, Wolvenstraat. She turned left, crossed the bridge, and walked a block past a row of shops to Kelzersgracht, the next canal. She looked to her left and right, turned left and then, at the intersection of Huidenstraat, left again, entering a row of shops that sold comestibles. Here she found what she was looking for: a greengrocer, cheese shop, bakery. She bought olives, green apples, goat cheese, almond tarts, and in a tearoom--chocolaterie, as a present for Stefan, chocolates flavoured with Earl Grey tea. Dark chocolate, a tart and smoky ganache. She tried one herself, having never tasted tea-flavoured chocolate before. Her head felt light and fine now. Invincible. As if she were meant to be here.

While the paths of arrival that led to a new place – the bus from Newark airport, the Piccadilly line from Heathrow, the van ride into Basseterre – were often seared with pain, the settling in, after that first spasm, could provide sudden release. Sometimes the spell lasted for days, a week, even two weeks. Fourteen days without a twinge or pang of migraine was possible, and a kind of miracle. In some sense, Claire surmised, you chemically jump-started your system – cut its ties, cut it loose, cut the familiar treading of certain neural pathways. The brain was forced to recreate itself by breathing different air and eating different food and walking different streets. There was always a point at which you allowed yourself to believe that this time you were home free, you had liberated yourself from whatever ailed you, a true transformation had taken

place. If you stayed, you might remain pain-free forever.

She wondered if Rachel felt this, too. Perhaps it was the lure of the city – any new city or Amsterdam, city of gurus and dope--smokers and asylum-seekers, in particular – that had brought her here, as much as the promise of treatment by a man who spoke to angels. Rachel had arrived in Amsterdam on March 17, four days before seeing Ariel on the twenty-first. What had she been up to during that time, days when she could have been in Toronto visiting Star? Or had she been so ill, so desperate to see Ariel that she'd dropped everything and come here as soon as she could?

It was Ariel who had given Claire the name of the Ambassade Hotel – not real luxe, but no budget hotel, either. He had offered to provide the name of a budget hotel or even a hostel if she needed. She'd asked if he knew where Rachel had stayed in Amsterdam – the same hotel? No, he thought she'd stayed with someone. A friend. (Claire had not uncovered any business cards with Amsterdam addresses in Rachel's apartment.)

What if by chance Rachel had called in and picked up the first message from Amy Levin, the one left on her voice mail, which Claire couldn't access? What if she were on her way to Amsterdam even now? And yet if Rachel had set up her own appointment with Ariel, surely Ariel, or Amy, would have let Claire know.

She kept walking.

The transformation a new place afforded was not simply the release from pain. The place itself was transforming. The streets Claire walked along moved from her feet up into her body. At the place where she and the city met, as the city entered her and became part of her, she herself was changed. An orange-canopied bar on the Prinsengracht would remain in her forever. As would the intersection of the Leidsegracht and the Keizersgracht where the Keizersgracht curved. The view from the Leidsegracht across the Keizersgracht through a second-storey window to an abstract painting on a white wall. A city linked not just by roads but by water offered more fluid possibilities of travel: a city built on blocks not gridded but curved. Her limbs, her brain felt lissome, calmed, now, like the water and tall houses under bright sunlight. In the future, the meeting of the Leidsegracht and the Keizersgracht would surface in her, encoding this calm.

Ariel had given Claire an address. She asked the concierge if she could reach the place on foot or if she needed to take a taxi. He said she could walk if she wished but to follow his directions closely – he pulled out a map of the city and drew a route on it – because all the streets looked the same. She would have to walk here, through the red-light district.

The weather was warm and sunny, once again hazy but not too hot.

This morning, once again, Claire was headache-free.

The street she entered at last was narrow, nondescript, not on water. The same tall brick houses rose towards the sky, the old interspersed with the new, all accented with window boxes. The building she wanted was an old one. A male voice greeted her and she was buzzed up. She ascended a white, wooden staircase, passing a woman in a trim red jacket who was descending. On the fourth landing, the door to apartment three stood ajar. Claire knocked, perhaps too softly, waited for a response and, receiving none, pushed the door open. To her left, in a small kitchen, stood a man clothed all in white. White jeans. White T-shirt. Barefoot. A man of perhaps fifty, not tall, neither thin nor plump, solidly built and of middle height, with a suggestion of feline suppleness, waited for a kettle to boil above a ring of blue flame on a gas stove.

"Hello," Claire said, "I'm Claire Barber."

The man swept her, startled, into his arms. "Ariel. I am so happy to see you."

He did not give her now, nor did he ever mention a surname. His accent was as pronounced as on the telephone. He hugged, then released her. Stepping back to the stove, he poured boiling water from the kettle into a white teapot, from which rose an aroma like straw, and asked Claire if she wanted a cup. When she said no, he motioned her out of the kitchen and asked her to take off her shoes. Then, mug in hand, he led her into a room that must ordinarily have been a living room, five by six paces, only all the furniture (sofa, armchair, end tables) had been pushed to the walls and draped in white sheets. In the middle of the room, a futon mattress with a sheet over top of it lay on a rectangle (1.8 by 2.4 metres) of Turkish carpet. Like a bed. It made Claire uneasy. She wondered who the apartment

belonged to. A woman. There remained something female about it, decorative touches. The carpet. A mirror over the mantelpiece, and on the mantelpiece, dried flowers in a vase, a china bell. Ariel seated himself cross-legged on the floor in front of a low table, forty centimetres high, covered with small brown dropper bottles. He set his tea on the table, and beckoned Claire to sit in front of him. "Already I see something of Rachel in you," he said. But Claire felt no trace of Rachel, had no intimation that Rachel was about to appear through the door or from anywhere else.

"You haven't heard from her, have you?" she asked. "Since the last time we spoke?"

He shook his head. "I do not think Rachel is coming to see me this time."

He told her that he travelled regularly to New York, to Amsterdam, sometimes to London, Geneva, other places. For fifteen years he had done so. He did not seem to find it unusual that people travelled the world to see him, to heal themselves. For the rest of the year, he lived in Israel, half the time in the desert in El Alot and the other half in Tel Aviv.

"Can you tell me why Rachel first came to you?"

"Sonya Lang told her about my work."

"Who's Sonya Lang?"

"She plays the violin. She has trouble here." He laid a hand over his abdomen – which meant, what, her digestive tract, her uterus, Claire couldn't be sure.

"If she's a friend of Rachel's, do you think you could give me her number?"

"Amy will give it to you."

"What did Rachel say was wrong with her when she came?"

Ah, he said, he did not so much listen to what people told him as to how their bodies spoke. He treated the whole body, and the body and spirit together. When Rachel first came she was like many people he saw, her body and spirit worn and stressed, because her spirit did not have a proper home in her body, and how could the body heal itself if the spirit was not in the body but loose and wandering the world? Most people when they first came were very ill, although their true sickness might not yet have revealed itself. If Rachel had not come to him, twice in New York, the last time in Amsterdam, in the future she would have been very ill. Much worse.

Where other people's gazes skimmed, his lingered. Unabashed, he stared at Claire though his stare did not feel sexual. There was

a presumption of intimacy, however. She wondered if Rachel had responded to his gaze as sexual. She had to listen closely because of his accent. He spoke with an authority that bordered on impatience, a self-assurance that doubled as bluntness, but this might also have something to do with his incomplete and idiosyncratic command of English.

"How did she seem when you saw her in March?"

"Better. There is still much work to do."

"She was complaining, before she disappeared, that her migraines kept getting worse."

"This problem goes very deep. These are old wounds."

It was strange, if Rachel really believed that Ariel's treatment was helping her, that she had said nothing about him to Claire, that she had not, for instance, urged Claire to come to New York to see him.

"How exactly do you work with people?"

"I will show you. There is no charge this time." He laid a hand on Claire's shoulder. "This is my gift."

He stood and beckoned Claire towards the futon. He asked if she would mind taking off her clothes. The first thing he had to do, he said, was find her wound. Then he could begin to heal her.

She could, even now, decide that this was not for her, despite having come all this way. And yet surely that would be a failure of nerve. She had tried some unusual things in the name of searching for a cure, if nothing as unusual as this. Yet she trusted Rachel, who would surely not have returned twice more to see Ariel if she considered him a complete hoax.

Claire removed her cotton dress and, in bra and underwear, seated herself cross-legged on the futon while Ariel crouched in front of her. He asked her to close her eyes. His hands began to move the air around her. He did not touch her, however. For a few moments he was silent, moving. Then he said he had found her wound. Nearly everyone who came to him had a wound, and it was his job to locate it. Then he had to find the wandering spirit in the world and bring it home to the body. When the body and spirit are separated, the body calls out for attention. He must show the spirit how to enter and inhabit the body. Heal the wound.

Her wound was at the back of her head. (Where was Rachel's?) Her blood did not flow properly. Not in her head, not to her organs or muscles. Her liver was tired from overwork. She suffered from a problem of circulation. Of energy. Energy did not flow smoothly through her body. There was a block. The energy was blocked because she was frightened. Once the spirit was back in her body true healing could begin. Before the wound was closed, nothing would stay in her body. The spirit was lost. He cupped the back of her head and her forehead in his firm hands, his very warm hands, and held her like that, supported for a moment, before lowering her, slowly, to the mattress.

Claire opened her eyes. He pointed to her bra and asked her to remove this, then to lie on her stomach. She surrendered to his requests, lay down, head turned to the right, cheek to the sheet, facing the empty fireplace across the room. It was all very strange but she tried not to think too much about the oddness. She floated. It was strange to be almost naked in front of this man but she did not feel violated. She did not know what Stefan would think when she told him about this – if she told him about this. Sometimes the healer laid his hands on her and sometimes he didn't. His touch could be a fleck, an adjustment, a vibrating manipulation. The points that he touched on her body and her scalp were all piercingly tender. Her hands grew very warm. This, without him touching them. Her body began to vibrate – it simply happened, there was no volition involved. "Breathe," he instructed her, nearly shouting, "breathe."

At one point she began to cry. She could not stop herself. She shuddered. She was frightened by her vulnerability, by what was being called up out of her. "You must stop being so frightened," Ariel shouted. "Welcome the spirit."

Something happened, she would tell Stefan later, even if she could not have said what. Some kind of energetic exchange. She was convinced of this much. Whatever the experience was, it was not nothing. In the moments in which Claire was most exposed to Ariel, she opened herself to an intense physical trust. The world opened. She opened. At the same time, she wanted to resist him, to make of her body a tougher membrane not a thinner one, and grew almost angry.

He spoke to her as he worked although she couldn't altogether remember or make sense of what he was saying. Partly it was his accent. At one point, he asked her how she was

feeling and she said fine, now, and if he meant generally then good except that, like Rachel, she got a lot of migraines. He asked her to turn over, onto her back. He laid one hand on her chest, on top of her collarbone, above her breasts, and peered down at her. "You must ask, 'What is the place of pain?'" Those were his exact words. He did not say, what does the pain mean, or, what do you think is the source of the pain. His phrasing was odd. She wondered if he used this phrase with everyone, if it was a characteristic of his non-native English, or if it was a phrase chosen specifically for her. He did not know (she had not told him) that she was a cartographer.

Afterwards, warm and exhausted, Claire was wrung out in the way you are after going through something inexplicably fraught, yet her body felt simultaneously full and limber. Embarrassed, her cheeks still flushed, she dressed and sat re-collecting herself, hugging her knees to her chest, while Ariel, cross-legged at the low table, surrounded by small brown bottles, nursed the remains of his tea. Perhaps an hour had passed. He said she should begin right away to notice some difference.

"With the headaches?"

"All of you."

(The difference she noticed was not one she would have predicted.

For days afterwards, people, men in particular, would come up to her in public places and begin to talk about themselves. That night, in a restaurant on Spuistraat, a red-haired Dutch-Canadian doctor, seated alone at the table next to Claire, launched with almost no warning (what was the precipitating comment – something about travel, their shared country, being far from home?), into the story of how he'd once been captured by Zairian rebels and forced in front of a dummy firing squad. He was, she realized, a missionary doctor. Something evangelical. Soon after the faux execution, he was commanded to operate on the wounded rebel leader, an order which provoked a great struggle in him, perhaps the most acute of his life, so deep as to shake his sense of faith, since the idea of aiding those who'd captured him repelled him, while the Hippocratic oath compelled him to do so. He surrendered to God's will. He saved the man, who then helped spirit the

doctor and his colleagues to safety. The doctor looked at Claire in puzzlement and said he had not talked about this episode in years and had no idea what made him speak of it now; then his expression turned to something closer to humiliation, as if his confession, his lurch into self-exposure were all Claire's doing. She remained astonished, past the point when he paid his bill, without addressing her again, and left.

Then there was the Indian man the next day in the coffee bar at Schiphol, who, with no coaxing, launched with effusive mania into a paean to the wonders of his patented electric bug zapper, regaling her with his dream of making his bug zapper the number one choice of all Indian households within the year, so enthused, so ardent in his mission that Claire was convinced, unless she made a run for it (she made a run for it), he would never stop.

And the man –)

Of course, Ariel went on, he did not like to work on someone just once. It left so much undone. Regularly his sessions cost \$150 US. Claire should think about coming back. To New York. It was not so far from Toronto. In the meantime, regular doctors would not be necessary now that she had begun to work with him.

"Rachel didn't say anything when she was here about not getting in touch with anyone. You didn't –"

"No. I believe there is a reason for her silence, but if you see her, tell her, tell her we need to continue our work together. It is very important, for the sake of her health."

Okay, Claire thought. Well, maybe. "She didn't say anything about what else she was doing in Amsterdam or where she was going afterwards? She was supposed to fly back on March 23 and she didn't."

"In March she was very tired. I say to her, rest, let the body and spirit recover, but she says she cannot. I tell her about a woman I know in Italy. She does very good work, with her hands. I tell her, Rachel, you are here in Europe, go to see her. I do not think she listened, but I have talked to my angels and now I think she went there."

"Went where –?"

"Hannah di Castro." The buzzer rang. "Her work will be good for you, also. At Terme di Saturnia. Near Grosseto. You take the train to Grosseto. Someone will show you the road."

From *Claire's Head* by Catherine Bush.

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ASCENT WITH THRUSHES

by Don McKay

1.

Listen, I tell my knees,
as we pause at the twenty-somethinged
switchback: at each step
we are accompanied by air. Listen:
the phrase slides, heartlessly,
past pain, wonder, grief, into its
interrogative lift, no questions asked,
no special pause called art. It falls
carelessly uphill, I say, listen,
we should be so lucky.

2.

Higher up, we pause to pant
while single buzzy
indigo-blue notes are drilled
toward us from the other side.
Spy-holes, probably,
so the sky can watch us
as we clamber toward it. As though
we were end-wise to the music.
As though we were
looking down the barrel of a song.

3.

Among subalpine fir beside
the partly frozen lake some unseen
singer is— against the best advice
a poet ever gave—
praising the unsayable to the angel.
I listen in immaculate calm. It's only Churl
and Mort, those unruly
ears of mine, who slaver after every
empty phrase.

4.

Later in the parking lot
I stretch and thank my knees,
without whose efforts, et cetera,
et cetera. On the far side of the notice board
the day's selections (Swainson's,
Varied, Hermit) are being recapped and discussed,
exhaustively, in demotic
American robin.

STARLING: for George Maciunas **by Lina Ramona Vitkauskas**

I'm trying to understand the obsequious mission of time,
its invasive watermark of blood and veins in a ladle
primary colors from sallow, rust canisters playing out
the new melodrama. Canisters of deceased
collectors, canisters of lost archivists, canisters
of the collective stars—unusually excited.

The igneous ballad hurls me into patent ruminations.
I am trying to be cordial with disaster,
cover myself with fennel seed and white dwarf dust
the universe conferring with my shifting birth,
tangled in the yokes of marigold zippers.

Blood With An Umlaut

What's left to be said?

Where wordly pieces part, plot, and clot,
there lies an eager biology, an impure otter.

Where the Coliseums expend a shrew
and natives understand the irony
of big, blessed Brazilian queens
against the extensive reconstruction of oratory.

Let's go hunting for snails and parodies.
I'll find my best vibration on the mainland.

You'll breeze in suddenly,
like a Bohemian torte,
topped with a jilted, custard smirk.

The Bias of Celestial Skin

Golden prawns test the litmus of being.

Spread all of your fears onto this dictaphone.
This is not a list.

Progression in tow, I get weaker, like credibility.

The impartial ham in the breakfast nook and
your cough syrup intentions.

Complete from vacuous said destination—your mind.
I said nothing.

I imagined a chivalrous exit. I birthed this
prime minister and he swept my floors.
This is not my last will.

A spritely submarine—sinking.

UNDINE

by Tom Dilworth

She is water rushing
 with force to you
 and away taking
 surprising turns
 under and through
 you feel her currents
 invisible their effects
 unpredictable continually
 changing agelessly
 innocent clear and
 obscuring here and afar
 travelling resonant
 of ocean and rain
 of mountainous
 turning plunging
 laughing over rapids
 slowing to pool
 deepening to colour of dark ale then
 off again
 clear over
 pebbles and weeds
 greening the banks along
 slaking thirst—she tastes
 good—seen from bridges and shore
 delighting her many admirers
 who watch a while
 touch
 get wet
 stilled
 cooled
 unable
 to hold
 or keep her
 losing her always.
 She stays her course
 passing through fingers
 around boulders
 over smooth shelves
 a fine sheet lacquering
 conspiring with light
 fire-like in flashing
 and sheen remembering
 sea-time and timelessness
 of the upper air
 dancing
 with wind and fire
 caressing the earth
 quenching its thirst
 crashing
 down
 falls
 gracelessly
 gracefully.
 She will not be damned.

Report: Poetry in Motion / Poésie en mouvement

by/par Carole Beaulieu, Endre Farkas, Carolyn Marie Souaid

In this report on “Poetry in Motion” we hear about the experience of a group of Francophone and Anglophone poets who have taken poetry to the public through the Montreal transit system. Rampike is pleased to document this collaborative art work. We are equally pleased to include many of our old friends and earliest contributors, a cluster of accomplished Québec poets, in this 25th anniversary issue.

*** *** ***

REPORT:

Endre Farkas: It began in 1979. Tom Konyves, one of the Vehicule Poets, a very active group of Montreal poets, conceived of the ‘poems on the buses’ project. It was to have the poems of 10 anglophone and 10 francophone poets traveling on 500 buses. It was also the time of the language wars in Quebec. It was a time when English was banned from public places or if it appeared, it had to be 30% smaller than the francophone sign. I guess size mattered. It was a time of passionate debate over the fate of the apostrophe. It was a time for thinking about language. It was a good time for the project. And the law did have the proviso that cultural events were exempt from the law. However, the ad company decided to err on the side of caution and the day before the launch, word came down that there were to be no English poems on the buses. I remember working all night on picket signs and preparing a press release which was leaked to *The (Montreal) Gazette*. They were supposed to sit on it until we started our manifestation; however, being newspaper people, they wanted to be the first with it and called Mayor Jean Drapeau’s office for a reaction. Now what conversation transpired between the mayor’s office and the ad company I know only as hearsay. Apparently, when His Worship heard about the potential bad PR, he got on the phone and told the company to get the English on the bus. So when Louis Dudek, F.R. Scott, Tom, Ken Norris and I and others showed up with our picket signs, the bus company lackey was there— all smiles— telling us that we had misunderstood, and that if we stepped aboard, we’d see all the poems on the bus. Sure enough, there they were. And there they stayed for about a year. And when the bus driver, assigned to the PR bus this year for the launch, was told what the project was, he said: “Ah oui, je me souviens des poèmes.”

The idea to do it again arose during a get-together meal a year ago when Tom, who now lived in Vancouver, came to town, and Artie Gold, Stephen Morrissey, and I began reminiscing. We thought it would be a good idea to do something for the 25th anniversary of the project and the 25th anniversary of the *The Vehicule Poets* anthology. We came up with the idea that since The Vehicule poets had operated out of an art gallery and had been involved in multimedia projects, then we should have a *Vehicule Week* consisting of an exposition, readings, performances, and the poems on the buses again. Then Tom went back to Vancouver, Artie to his apartment, and Stephen to love, leaving me to try to get these crazy projects off the ground. I don’t know whether I contacted the Société de transport de Montréal (transport commission also known as the STM) or Carolyn Marie Souaid first. I do remember e-mailing Carolyn about a new literary theory I was working on: ‘The Past Post-Modern Theory’. It’s the theory of using the past as the past and being past post-modern. And this project seemed to fit. And so I asked her to join the project.

Carolyn Marie Souaid: I jumped on board almost without thinking. The idea of putting poems on buses seemed like a good way to give some visibility to poetry, which often gets short shrift on the literary playing field. It also seemed a good opportunity to knock it out of the ivory tower where it tends to reside, impenetrably, much of the time. The week Endre emailed his ‘Past Post-Modern’ idea to me, I had been re-reading a statement Philip Larkin made back in 1955, an explanation for why he wrote poetry. Basically, what appealed to him, he said, was the idea of rescuing an experience from oblivion. His drive to freeze-frame snippets of existence seemed to jibe with my own motives for writing.

Certainly, this notion of immortalizing experience is neither new nor revolutionary. But add motion to the formula, tack on a vector, and see where it takes you. I began to visualize hundreds of tiny rescued moments, like satellites, shuttling through town. Occasionally, even, crisscrossing one another *en route*. Factor in the passengers, multitudinous, and all their heart-stopping moments. Suddenly, a single ride to work becomes a venue for colliding worlds—the

poet's world intersecting with the traveller's world for a brief blink in time. I immediately connected with this notion of poetry as both intimate conversation between writer and reader, and dynamic, kinetic experience.

Endre Farkas: We decided to time the project to coincide with National Poetry Month. But I wanted it to be more than just a poetry event. I started to think of the bus project as a conceptual piece as well: a site-specific installation or, to be more precise, an 800-site-specific installation. And this site-specific installation would be kinetic. Also it would achieve what no individual poet or his/her books could—having an audience of thousands a day. I asked Carole Beaulieu, a visual artist, if she would be interested in designing the poster. Carole had designed the cover of my book *From Here to Here* and had done public installation projects.

Carole Beaulieu: It was exciting to be given the opportunity to collaborate with poets and to once again place art in a public place. This time, though, the work would be in hundreds of public places at once, in constant motion, and would be exposed to a mass of viewers in continuous flux. The poems were given to me one or two at a time, over a few weeks. I began to take the poems with me on my almost daily bus rides, reading them, looking at the riders as potential readers, and examining the space inside and outside the bus. At first, Endre said that we would have an image for each poem, so I made a lot of sketches, giving each poem its own image while keeping a visual thread running through the series. When I learned that we could only afford one image for all the poems, I reversed the exercise, gathering in that thread, finding common ground among the poems. Still riding the bus everyday, mostly on one of my favourite cross-town streets, it seemed to me that Montreal architecture would make the most site-specific image, and would touch people on a physical level.

I have placed art in public places many times, sometimes the projects were clandestine (anti-arson graffiti, sheet music on the street, ice sculpture in the park) and sometimes the projects were official or at least organised (sculpture in a subway station and in a university campus, a few murals, one in support of the Innu of Labrador, and another in support of the James Bay Cree). The artful dodger aspect of the clandestine work makes it really intense and memorable for the artist, but the work itself is ephemeral and rarely far-reaching. The more organised public projects,

where someone takes care of permits and materials, are really an artist's dream, with promises of respect and free rein (let's hear it for artists being given the «means of production»!). No matter how well planned the official the projects are, though, there is always a point at which negotiations take a fairly ugly turn, where earlier intentions are questioned, and someone with power decides that one really can't let artists do whatever they want, because it is just too frightening. This time, the poems— not the image— were put in question, and I was left alone to enjoy my work. Positions eventually shifted somewhat, and the project lived. As I ride the bus these days, I take great pleasure in re-reading these poems, some of which I now know by heart, and I am grateful to have been part of that reaching for beauty.

Endre Farkas: The STM had extreme reservations about two of the poems, Tom's "Into This Space" and Mohamud Siad Togane's "Now that I'm Civilized." Tom's contained the word "orgasm" and Togane's "fornication". I guess you can't fornicate or have an orgasm on a Montreal bus. But seriously, neither was used in a way that was pornographic. However, the STM felt that it had a responsibility to protect passengers from these words. I tried to convince them that there were ads lot more provocative and with no redeeming social values on the buses. They responded by saying that those were paid for; saying, in essence, that if you pay the bill, then you call the shots. However, if you are a "cultural event", then you are dependent on the kindness of others. I asked Tom and Togane whether they wanted to fight this or consider other poems. They decided not to endanger the project and submitted other poems. I am not sure whether we did the right thing but I appreciate their generous gestures. In Montreal, to get funding from the city, you have to be a charitable/numbered organization. We weren't, so we approached Blue Metropolis Foundation, which runs the annual International literary festival in Montreal. They agreed to take us under their umbrella. We applied for the grant. We also contacted the transport commission. They were also enthusiastic about the project and agreed to give us their public announcement space on 800 buses for a month. The money we got from the city was not enough for our grandiose twenty individual graphics plan. Within a short time, we were down to a single image for all the poems and thinking about cutting back on the print run. We also learned from a friend at CBC — always good to have friends at the CBC— that Members of the National

Assembly (provincial MNAs) had end-of-year money to spend. Carolyn was inspired to hit them up and while we were at it, bookstores and publishers.

Carolyn Marie Souaid: Inspired is a rather nice word for what I was actually feeling—desperate. I knew that National Poetry Month would be upon us before we knew it, and with the time factor breathing down my neck, I felt pressured to branch out beyond the usual suspects for potential sources of funding. I thumbed through phone books and newspapers, trying to scare up a list of partners. In the excitement of the project, I left no stone unturned—I contacted department stores, pharmacies, micro-breweries, even dollar stores. At the same time, I felt ambivalent about the idea of marrying culture with corporate money. I hated the thought that donors might participate not because they believed in the project as a cultural step forward but because they knew they were going to get something from us in return—probably their corporate logo on the posters, a relatively inexpensive way to advertise. Meanwhile, in the eyes of the community, it would look as though these enterprisers were selfless patrons of culture.

Frankly, it had never occurred to me to hit up our provincial politicians, but once that bee was put in my bonnet, I rounded up the names of every MNA whose geographical riding housed a Montreal bus route. While using private corporate money to subsidize public art left a bad taste in my mouth, it was infinitely easier for me to reconcile the idea of using the public purse to help get the poems on the road. Wasn't it, after all, the people's money, anyway? I counted on the fact that politicians would go for a little positive exposure. Then Endre came up with an ingenious way to package the request. He called it 'Adopt-a-Poet'. After calculating how much money we still needed to make the project a go and dividing it by the total number of participating poets—20—he came up with the round figure that we would ask for in our request letter. The idea was that for so many dollars, one could adopt-a-poet. What this succeeded in doing was to reign-in the project, putting a more personal spin on it. Rather than simply sending us their cheque, sponsors could become a little more involved by choosing which poet they wanted to 'adopt', whose poster they wanted their logo on. In the end, two publishers,

two bookstores, and three MNAs believed in the project enough to grant us funds.

And I can live with it. Because for me, the objective was Beauty, a momentary respite from all the dehumanizing effects of war and consumerism. I wanted the poems on the buses to give the commuter a breath of fresh air from the usual dose of visual pollution coming at him in the form of advertisements seducing him all day long to buy, buy, buy. Wallace Stevens once defined poetry as "that which helps us live." It was my hope that this sampling of poetry on the buses would afford Montrealers an opportunity to pause, reflect, take in a little food for the soul, get reacquainted with themselves. That on a small scale, this *moving* anthology would help people 'live.'

Endre Farkas: And the project lives on and keeps on rolling. After the launch at Paragraphe Bookstore, a number of us went to La Cabane (the local after-event hangout) and somewhere in the din after a few beers we came up with the idea of a "Poem Spotting" contest. We thought that this would certainly make the event interactive. I announced in a mass e-mailing that the first person to spot all twenty poems would win a bus pass for a month. The competition would be run on the honour system with "spotting standings" posted on my website. Vanessa Landry, a college student, ended up tracking all 20 posters barely three weeks into the contest. Because commuters were so receptive to the project, the bus company decided to extend the run for an extra month, allowing poets attending June's annual general meeting of the League of Canadian Poets an opportunity to experience poetry in motion. And, in October 2004, the posters were exhibited in a small town outside Trois-Rivières as part of the city's prestigious *Festival International de la Poésie*. Last, but not least, the poems live on in this issue of *Rampike*. When we began, Carolyn and I had no idea of the myriad of directions this project would take. We encourage others to go for it. I think projects like this are important artistically, as well as socially. It is a way of reclaiming public space for the public and the arts. And being on the bus, we contribute to the quality of the ride. Here then, is the poetry from the Montreal cluster of poets!

3 HOTELS**par Claude Beausoleil****Grand Hôtel des Étrangers**

Je suis un voyageur
 que le langage invente
 je ne demande rien
 je cherche le désir
 quelque part en moi-même
 au plus loin des frontières
 dans des rues aux distances
 imaginées de brume

The Grand Hotel of Foreigners

I am a traveller
 invented by language
 i ask nothing
 i seek desire
 somewhere within myself
 farthest from the borders
 in distant streets
 imagined in mist
*(translated by Jed English
 and George Morrisette)*

Gran Hotel de Extranjeros

Soy un viajero
 que el lenguaje inventa
 nada pido
 busco el deseo
 el alguna parte de mi
 mas alla de las fronteras
 en las calles en las distancias
 imaginadas de la bruma
(version de Bernardo Ruiz)

VIENT LE JOUR OÙ**par Hélène Dorion**

Vient le jour où l'on quitte la gare.
 Enfermé depuis toujours, on cesse soudain
 de chercher des abris.
 On lâche les amarres.
 Tout s'allège et le ciel s'entrouvre.

Alors, plus nue de n'avoir jamais été nue
 notre âme écoute pour la première fois
 son silence intérieur.

RUE ST-DENIS**par Jean-Paul Daoust**

L'après-midi allume rue St-Denis
 Les mares d'une neige brunâtre
 Où pataugent des flâneurs
 Tapage d'insectes sur les pétales
 D'une ville où l'hiver se démaquille

HOTEL MONTREAL**by Ken Norris**

It will always be you
 in the Hotel Montreal,
 you in skirt and suspenders,
 you in garter belt and stockings,
 you in the warm shower
 having me wash your back.

The seasons will go
 out of fashion,
 stars will fall
 from their fixed positions in the sky,
 but memory
 will never relinquish you.

Even when we have become
 insubstantial shadows,
 your ghost will haunt these rooms,
 bringing newly-met lovers
 a supernal happiness.

LA MUSIQUE TE SOULÈVE**par Élise Turcotte**

La musique te soulève. Cohorte de lièvres
 traversant la piste d'un aéroport désert.
 De petits objets soupirant
 pour être peint dans un ciel blanc.
 Silhouette d'arbre noir, lune comme
 un autoportrait glacé.
 Je suis si près de toi. Au-dessus de ma tête,
 s'allonge un ciel nordique.
 Tu auras froid, ton manteau saignera.
 Je peindrai des icônes d'animaux sur les
 murs.
 Mon amour resplendira.

ÉCHO

par Denise Desautels

Écho entre fenêtre et fêlure. Elle le sent
s'activer dans le vague de l'air ; le sent
remuer fort en elle sous le muscle ; le
devine, dehors dedans, jais qui s'acharne, se
déploie, ample, touffu, grave, semblable à
lui-même. Lui donne un nom, tout droit sorti
de l'enfance et de l'automne : «Noir».
Répète : «Noir». Le matin s'ouvre, vieux
déjà, et la nuit s'y expose. Même broyé,
même mobile, elle le reconnaît. En a
l'habitude, en sait long sur son compte,
forcément rejointe par ses assauts, ses mys-
tères, ses ruses et l'empreinte qu'il laisse, à
chaque instant, sur la suite du monde :
lamento, nocturne, requiem, tombeau, nature
morte. Sous cet angle, la lumière n'a plus
tout à fait le profil de la lumière.

JE SUIS ASSIS DANS LE COIN

par Émile Martel

Je veux peindre un tableau
bien trop grand pour la pièce où je veux
l'accrocher.

Que faire de cet intérieur plus grand que son
extérieur?

Je vais peindre dans mon tableau la pièce où
il se trouve.

Puis je vais m'asseoir par terre
dans un coin du tableau
les bras autour des genoux.

Et je vais te regarder dans les yeux.

Jusqu'à ce que tu viennes visiter ma maison
folle.

DIRGE

by Mohamud Siad Togane

1.

It is now the false dawn
Sleep has fled
our once happy sheets
colder than a shroud.
Where are you, love?

2.

Outside
it is dark
it is dreary
it is dreadful
and the rain is beating
beating a dirge
upon my window
upon my soul—
Where are you, love?

ROAD KILL

by Carolyn Marie Souaid

I never meant to run you down.
Frighten, yes.

Coming at you
in my wolverine dress & heels, aiming
dead on
as your slow wit
bellied, unsuccessfully, for the ditch.

Nix the swerving car, the impact,
hysteria, & what's left is pure

unadulterated desire: my imprint on your
wool.

Skid-marks, & the wet sound of you,
oozing.

I AM A SURFER

by Artie Gold

I am a surfer at 12 o'clock high
keeping to the crests of life
the good times will never pass me by

for I also have a large net I cast
out over the calendar
and it nets me some fine days

I dance free of the fates
like in a western where the cowboy
dodges every bullet

as approaching the prime target
or the gold mine
with bandits all around it

and suddenly one day I'll reach in
grab that bag of loot
and ride off on my horse.

O ANIMUS

by Claudia Lapp

O animus
everywhere i see you
ever-changing triptych of male beauty
sensitive sensuels
tall-walking and lithe

On my red skateboard
i zoom by you
in mukluks
sneakers
sandals
or shoeless

You try and catch my hair
you don't see my trajectory,
skateboard aimed for outer space
thru inner space
thru you, Love,
and back again

RAIN RAIN

by Endre Farkas

Rain rain come again.
Rain rain,
we've been wearing white too, too long,
wash this winter down the drain.
We want to change into a spring-green song.

Rain rain we itch and lust.
Rain rain
we yearn for glistening showers,
and from beneath this winter's dirt and dust
we ache toward clouds of arousal.

Rain rain come right now!
Rain rain
slip your myriad of moist tongue tips
into every conceivable fold
and melt away this winter's icy hold.

Rain rain right down to our roots.
Rain rain
where life begins again,
until our ecstasy rises through the shoots
and all is made as right as rain.

KITE-FLYING DAY

by Stephanie Bolster

Those aren't planes down by the lake.
There are strings, and kids, little, clutching
what's theirs. On the calendar it's spring

and in a Japanese print from long ago
a carp dances aloft a pole, stuffed with air.
The teary green of open leaves. It is almost

happening. Each day another hint. The trees
we thought in winter might be lilacs
reveal themselves.

BECAUSE REALITY IS TOO MUCH
by Stephen Morrissey

because reality is too much
to handle

we have thought up
ingenious ways of avoiding it

new languages
the colour of

coca cola the taste of
ground glass even the

letters of the alphabet
have been redesigned

for an A we now
draw a mayan pyramid

with at least a thousand
blood sacrifices dont

draw a heart you dont
know what you're getting into

HOPSCOTCH
by Tom Konyves

JUMP
THROUGH HOOPS
FOR
LOVE
MONEY POWER
UNTIL
DEATH.

C'EST ÉTRANGE CETTE ALLURE
par Nicole Brossard

c'est étrange cette allure que prend le
chagrin
plus fort que l'aurore dans le smog
et nous
de l'autre côté du vent nous voici
retenant notre souffle
entre les blessures et les cicatrices

EMPORTEZ-MOI
par Jacques Brault

Emportez-moi nuages d'enfance
cerfs-volants et chemises de nuit
vieux nuages fatigués
de paître le songe

DIRE JE SUIS FEMME
par Madeleine Gagnon

Dire je suis femme de ce peuple aimé
dans les mémoires d'ombres oser l'écrire
les monuments de feuilles meurent
graver quand même
les monuments sans socle
à nulle gloire promise
au bout du chemin long
dire je suis d'un voyage
revenue
au bout du chemin long
dire les revenants
parlés et vus

Chant pour un Québec lointain, VLB éditeur
(copyright VLB éditeur and Madeleine
Gagnon, 1990).

LE VENT RAMASSE
par Martine Audet

Le vent ramasse de fines poussières, l’empreinte
des murs, celle du ciel remuant sa paille. Est-il
possible d’approcher davantage? Faut-il parler
seulement? Je rêve d’un sillon que tes cils
entrouvrent.

De si nombreuses espèces piègent les oiseaux.

ON THE MARRIAGE OF HEAVEN AND EARTH
by Ruth Taylor

The eyes that sometimes look out from my eyes
and mouth that curls an almost-alien smile into my lips
the inner body forces that drive an eerie duality
a half-familiar reflex in the mind, a fear that is not mine
harmonic voice that makes one voice in two hearts singing
where we are one, Thee and I—but on the other side
where the World bides its time as far apart as lifetimes
separation and connection, sorrow and joy, more sorrow than joy
fear and love, more fear than love, dead silence and song
more silent than a Song of Songs the eternal dark light blind sight.

Ah but your hands, your separate hands and sovereign eyes
the midnight kiss at noon of sun on both the planet’s sides
the pell-mell plunge into inner/outer one space, bedrock
and the arkless deluges of longing, the cosmic inundations
the telepathic wedding in a circle of blossoming peonies
the honey stolen from the cave of the sun in a dream
the mescaline clouds and the mescaline mountains
and the breakfast of half a kiss.



Collage: “Poetry on the buses” c/o Carole Beaulieu, Endre Farkas, Carolyn Marie Souaid.

LECTION by Margaret Christakos

This is my new book.
This is of jouissance and I
half smile. You are some

one I like a lit
tle playing to lose pants fair
ly. My middle fin

gers smell of the juice
before curtains tank. Cannis
ters of news reach the

front and then on cer
tain days I absorb you. In
dividuals can

be made to stand for
itself, in an upright e
lection. For most of

the day I resist
flashlights and batons, reverb.
Rooms are potent moors

but the book I wrote
when I was old. I was a
fraud of the proba

ble oil in corners
and also to blow apart.
Craps is a game we

feel like if you rel
ish my reservations. Cig
arettes and torches

are so boats rarely
have heaters. My nation pro
fessionally stands

showering myself
too evenly. The food I like
to crook I palling

on deep-seated er
rors. You can see for yourself
is the duck I caught

blindfolded.

SASHIMI CASHMERE

by Carolyn Forde

Two sushi chefs begin arranging their work under fluorescent lights. They lay the cold damp slabs of flesh in concentric circles, alternating from tongue pink tuna to opaque white squid. They are noiseless and efficient. Their hands move rapidly, hovering over their art. They are surgeons performing a delicate operation.

The spiral starts around her belly button. Her midriff is a checkerboard. They move to her upper body and cover her breasts with the round purple suction cups of octopus tentacles, her throat with green *chizu* leaves. Below her waist they place a small triangle of blowfish—poisonous if improperly prepared—where hair would have been. A brush with death is more thrilling and more costly when eaten off a foreign woman. Her legs are covered with California rolls. They place edible flowers in her navel, in her underarms, behind her ears and in her hair and even tuck one between her thighs. She is garnished.

She is rolled from the harshly lit kitchen into the dim light of the restaurant. As her eyes adjust to the darkness she sees only the ceiling, which is covered with pinprick halogen stars. She hears low male voices murmuring appreciation when she arrives at their table.

She feels small jabs as chopsticks lift pieces of fish from her chest, her shoulders, her ankles. She conjures the image of herself reflected in a gilded fitting-room mirror. She is flawless in couture. She is immaculate in Armani. The air feels chilly as the men remove the cold pieces of fish one at a time, revealing damp patches of bare skin. Staring at the ceiling stars she imagines she is at the beach. She wishes she could smile but remains expressionless. The raw fish is a blanket. She wants to stretch, to move her legs, but has to wait for the party to finish. The sashimi becomes cashmere against her skin as she thinks of the Calvin Klein sweater-dress she will buy tomorrow.

The drunken chatter is easy to tune out because she can't understand it. The clicking and probing chopsticks are harder to ignore. One misses the blowfish entirely and slides where it shouldn't, another tries to lift her nipple as though it were a separate piece of edible meat. None of the men enter her field of vision, and as far as she can tell, none try to see her face. She is a table, a plate with a pulse. By the end, the artistic arrangement is left an abandoned and incomplete puzzle. A clap announces the end of the party. She is rolled away.

“RUSHING INTO A GIGANTIC BOONDOGGLE, AND THE *REAL* THREAT”

An Excerpt from *Rushing to Armageddon* (M&S)

by Mel Hurtig

Mel Hurtig is one of Canada's best-known economic nationalists. He was a founding member of the Committee for an Independent Canada and founding chairman of the Council of Canadians. A critic of foreign ownership and control in Canada, he campaigned vigorously against the Free Trade Agreement with the U.S. Hurtig is the author of the best-selling book *The Betrayal of Canada*, and the driving force behind the National Party (committed to nationalist/populist goals). He has received much recognition for his outspoken nationalism, including numerous honorary degrees. He also received the Lester B. Pearson Man of the Year Peace Award (1988) and is an Officer of the Order of Canada. *Rampike* is honoured to offer this excerpt from Hurtig's latest book, *Rushing to Armageddon* (McClelland & Stewart).

This extraordinary emphasis on missile defense represents misplaced priorities. The top priority should instead be combating the threat of nuclear terrorism . . . – Union of Concerned Scientists

Now let's turn to the question of whether there really is an ICBM missile threat. Richard Gwyn wrote in the *Toronto Star*:

It's impossible to imagine any circumstances in which some suicidal dictator would heave a nuclear missile at the U.S. – a feat that's exceptionally difficult to do in itself – while knowing that minutes later he himself would be vaporized in a mushroom-shaped cloud.

Terrorists are quite another matter. If and when they ever acquire weapons of mass destruction, they'll try to slip them in by ship or by truck. Against such a threat, the U.S.'s anti-missile program is irrelevant, which is to say it's a gigantic boondoggle.*

Let's again suppose for a moment, ridiculous as it may be, that down the road, say twenty years from now, after many hundreds of billions and probably much more have been spent on a so-called missile shield, that the shield is at least moderately effective, a *huge* leap of faith in itself. The *Los Angeles Times* says “If you want to bring a nuclear weapon into the United

States, just hide it in some shipment of illegal drugs.”

The Union of Concerned Scientists says “nuclear weapons detonated in a U.S. port while still in a shipping container in a cargo ship” is another of the “delivery options . . . that would be less expensive.” And in relation to 9/11 and the destruction of the World Trade Center, in an incredibly scary suggestion:

Had these attackers chosen to fly commercial aircraft into the nuclear power plants less than 10 miles upwind of New York City, it might have made the entire region an unlivable nuclear wasteland for generations.

As several writers have pointed out, since tons of cocaine are smuggled into the U.S. every year, what's to prevent a warhead or two, or more, being transported across the border? American military and Republican NMD advocates don't like to talk about this.

Paul Krugman has few doubts and agrees with a report published by the American Army War College that says that the war in Iraq has been a “detour” that has undermined the fight against terror. Both

David Kay, the former UN weapons inspector and CIA adviser, and Richard Clarke, the long-time White House terrorism adviser, embarrassed and angered the Bush administration by publicly coming to the same conclusion.

There are those who say that September 11 makes the NMD program a necessity. I would think that it proves exactly the opposite. *The Economist* explains:

The threat comes from terrorists; there are much cheaper, handier and less incriminating ways for weapons of mass destruction to be dispatched by al-Qaeda, or a rogue despot, than by a ballistic missile – such as a suitcase. The billions being handed to the Missile Defense Agency could be better spent on humbler things such as port security . . . *

The Union of Concerned Scientists puts it this way:

This extraordinary emphasis on missile defense represents misplaced priorities. The administration's top priority should instead be combating the threat of nuclear terrorism by increasing its programs to keep nuclear warheads and materials out of the hands of terrorists. The Bush administration, however, is giving this problem a fraction of the attention and funding being given to missile defense. The missile defense system being rushed into deployment is not relevant to the war on terrorism.

A new nuclear risk has emerged. Thousands of so-called tactical nuclear weapons, some of which are small enough to be transported by a person, are stored in poorly secured locations in Russia. Nuclear materials that can be used to make nuclear weapons are even more poorly secured throughout the world. For example, scientific research reactors in dozens of countries are fueled with weapons-usable uranium.

Despite the end of the Cold War more than a decade ago, U.S. nuclear weapons policy remains mired in Cold War thinking.[†]

On February 4, Reuters quoted a Cairo report that al-Qaeda purchased as many as 100 “portable suitcase-sized bombs” from the Ukraine when Ukrainian scientists visited Kandahar in 1998:

Former Russia national security advisor Alexander Lebed said that as many as 100 portable bombs went unaccounted for when the Soviet Union dissolved. Mr. Lebed said each one was equivalent to 1,000 tonnes of TNT and could kill as many as 100,000 people.*

Kurt Gottfried is an emeritus professor of physics at Cornell University and a co-founder of the Union of Concerned Scientists. In a May 2003 article titled “A Ticking Nuclear Time Bomb,” Gottfried addressed the question of terrorist access to nuclear materials, in particular highly enriched uranium (HEU) and plutonium:

The Russian stockpile holds about 1,000 tons of HEU. By contrast, less than 100 pounds of such uranium is needed to make a crude bomb of the type that destroyed Hiroshima, the design of which was so simple that it was not even tested by the United States before being used in 1945. It would only be prudent to assume that a capable terrorist group like al-Qaeda could build a weapon of this type if it could get enough HEU.

Perhaps worse, only a handful of plutonium is needed to make a weapon of the type that destroyed Nagasaki. The Russian stockpile has enough plutonium for thousands of such bombs. States that seek nuclear weapons for military use, especially as warheads for missiles, are therefore very eager to acquire plutonium.

Russia's nuclear weapons are better secured than its fissile materials and, on the whole, weapons are much harder to steal and transport. Still, the Russian stockpile does contain thousands of portable tactical nuclear weapons that are relatively "small" in size. Knowledgeable sources indicate that many of the older models still in the stockpile are not equipped with locks that require a code or key to prevent unintentional use. Clearly, terrorists would have special interest in getting such a ready-to-use device.*

We also now know that Pakistani scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan has sold nuclear technology, including secret blueprints, centrifuges, and components for over a decade to such places as Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Turkey, Morocco, North Korea, Iran, and Libya. Is there much doubt that Osama bin Laden or his successors, not to mention other terrorists, will have had access to this information? In April 2004, his second-in-command, Ayman al-Zawahiri, boasted that al-Qaeda now possessed radioactive material combined with conventional explosives in the form of suitcase bombs, and that "anything is available for thirty million dollars on the black market in central Asia."[†]

Not only would defensive security measures concentrating on potential terrorist attacks be *far* more effective than the Bush/Rumsfeld NMD plans, they would not generate the escalating response from Russia and China and other nations now so badly frightened by America's space war plans.

I doubt that the public fully understands the hair-raising ramifications of Abdul Qadeer Khan's shocking activities. Even Mohamed ElBaradei was completely taken aback by how much equipment and how many detailed plans were spread so widely around the world, in what he called "a veritable Wal-Mart of black market proliferation" in Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and South Africa. Without question,

the future now looks much more threatening:

What takes the breath away is the sheer scale, and the apparent ease with which it was done. Weapons blueprints (so Libya has admitted; the others aren't saying), materials and parts for thousands of centrifuges to enrich uranium from which bombs can be made, as well as for related nuclear processes, were bought, in effect by mail order, like so many assemble-it-yourself bookshelves or kitchen cabinets. Thoughtfully, there was after-sales service instructions: technical questions could be relayed back to the scientists at source, presumably in Pakistan where the whole illicit business originated. Middlemen operating from Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Asia were on hand to speed delivery and process payment.

If individuals, with or without an official nod, can organize the supplying, what is to stop other individuals doing the buying? And if money was the Pakistani scientists' main motive, Osama bin Laden has plenty of that.*

Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan, the father of Pakistan's nuclear bomb, a much admired and revered man in his country, with the certain, though hotly denied participation of the Pakistani military and intelligence service, has set into place a situation where countries such as Iran and North Korea could (if they have not already) transfer the technology obtained from Pakistan to terrorist groups who would build nuclear weapons. Seymour M. Hersh, writing in *The New Yorker*, says that IAEA inspectors in Libya found precise blueprints for the design and construction of a half-ton nuclear weapon that will fit into a family car. "It's a terrorist's dream." Hersh goes on to tell of his conversation with Mohamed ElBaradei who said:

I have a nightmare that the spread of enriched uranium and nuclear material could result in the operation of a small enrichment facility in a place like northern Afghanistan.[†]

What about the wildly exaggerated idea emanating recently from a U.S. Library of Congress report that the threat of terrorism could come from Canada, because we are “hospitable to organized crime and terrorism”? Of course, as in all other Western nations, there are those in Canada with terrorist connections. And of course Canadians must be vigilant. But, University of Toronto security and intelligence expert Wesley Wark responds that the U.S. report seems to have been written by a person who:

didn’t have a very good grasp of the realities of security policy in Canada. I found it a very unimpressive and very inexperienced (and) a very crude look at the Canadian situation. I thought it was a dreadful piece of work . . . very unbalanced.*

But, perhaps it is on a par with the splendid research the CIA, the FBI, and the U.S. National Security Agency managed in relation to the bountiful weapons of mass destruction that would surely be found in Iraq, and on a par with the hopeless work of the CIA and FBI prior to September 11.

In March, in a widely reported story from the right-wing Nixon Center think tank in Washington, the Canadian border was called “a preferred *ji*had access route to America.” Europe and Canada were both harshly criticized for “indulgent” immigration and refugee policies. The report notes that “nearly all terrorists in the West have been immigrants.” Of interest is the report’s conclusion that of 212 terrorists examined, by far the largest number were in the U.S. and had not originated in Canada. (Among Nixon Center board members are such objective “notables” as Henry Kissinger and Conrad Black.)

No doubt Canadians have to remind Americans, yet again, that there were more than six million illegal aliens in the U.S. at the time of 9/11, and that thirteen of the nineteen hijackers entered the U.S. legally on student, tourist, or business visas.

Oh, and by the way, no Canadian flight training school was dumb enough to agree to train applicant pilots who had no interest in learning how to takeoff or land a plane.

We now know that George W. Bush ignored intelligence information and explicit warnings from Bill Clinton before 9/11, and that, according to Richard Clarke who served three U.S. presidents as the White House counterterrorism expert:

By invading Iraq, the President of the United States has greatly undermined the war on terrorism.*

David Rennie of the *Daily Telegraph*, writing from Washington, says:

Clarke described an administration in which a small circle of hawks fed Bush only what they wanted him to hear. Bush “ignored it; he ignored terrorism for months.”[†]

Instead Bush, Rumsfeld, Condoleezza Rice and Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz (described as an “Iraq Hawk”) were obsessed by Iraq, while Clarke and others said the focus should be prompt action against al-Qaeda. After 9/11 Bush demanded that officials “go back over everything” to “see if Saddam did this . . . if he’s linked in any way . . . I want to know any shred.” We also now know that after 9/11 a bipartisan delegation urged Bush to spend about \$10 billion on important security priorities such as at U.S. ports and nuclear sites, but the president rejected their pleas.

More recently, two American defence and security analysts wrote:

... if defeating terrorism remains the top U.S. security goal, why is the Bush administration spending billions on major weapons systems more appropriate to the Cold War? Why maintain 12 aircraft-carrier battle groups and fund new nuclear-powered attack submarines and three fighter-plane programs?*

In November of 2001, in a letter addressed to the U.S. Senate Majority and Minority Leaders, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the House Minority Leader, the Federation of American Scientists, including fifty Nobel Prize winners in chemistry medicine, physics, and economics, wrote:

In the interest of national security we urge you to deny funding for any program, project, or activity that is inconsistent with the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty. The tragic events of September 11 eliminated any doubt that America faces security needs far more substantial than a technically improbable defense against a strategically improbable Third World ballistic missile attack.

Regarding the probable threat, the September 11 attacks have dramatized what has been obvious for years: A primitive ICBM, with its dubious accuracy and reliability and bearing a clear return address, is unattractive to a terrorist and a most improbable delivery system for a terrorist weapon. Devoting massive effort and expense to countering the least probable and least effective threat would be unwise.

In May 2003, Professor Richard Schneider, President of the Canadian Council of Churches, wrote to prime minister Chrétien and members of the Chrétien cabinet expressing concern about the government's intention to become involved in the U.S.

BMD system. The letter urged the government to:

...seek an unqualified commitment from the U.S. that ballistic missile defences will not involve basing or testing any weapons in space...

And to request that:

The United States government agree to talks in Geneva at the Conference on Disarmament leading to a space weapons ban, before proceeding further with BMD deployment.

Both requests were essentially ignored. Then, on March 15, 2004, the Canadian Council of Churches, including the Anglican Primate, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Moderator of the United Church, Baptists, Methodists, Quakers, Lutherans, Mennonites, Presbyterians, and many others, wrote to Prime Minister Martin urging:

An intensified commitment to nuclear disarmament and binding controls over ballistic missiles as the most effective and practical means of working for the safety and protection of Canadians.

Proposed security solutions like ballistic missile defence fail to counter the nuclear threat and precipitate further insecurities.

We urge your government to unequivocally reject the expensive futility of ballistic missile defence. We call on you to focus on the more realistic pursuit of diplomacy and verification technology to mitigate the missile threat, and further, to encourage the United States to do the same.

Three days later Bryan Adams, Pierre Berton, Michael Ondaatje, David Suzuki, Susan Aglukark, Sacha Trudeau, Sarah McLachlan, Bruce Cockburn, Fred Penner, George Bowering, Flora MacDonald, Naomi

Klein, Robert Bateman, and many other well-known Canadians sent an open letter to the Prime Minister urging him not to allow Canada to become involved in the U.S. administration's missile defence system, which:

...will have long-term negative consequences for global security, and for Canadian sovereignty.

Eleven days later forty-nine U.S. Generals and Admirals, including three former Joint Chiefs of Staff, wrote to George W. Bush that:

U.S. technology already deployed, can pinpoint the source of a ballistic missile launch. It is, therefore, highly unlikely that any state would dare to attack the U.S. or allow a terrorist to do so from its territory with a missile armed with a weapon of mass destruction, thereby risking annihilation from a devastating U.S. retaliatory strike.

The letter ended this way:

As you have said, Mr. President, our highest priority is to prevent terrorists from acquiring and employing weapons of mass destruction. We agree. We therefore recommend, as the militarily responsible course of action, that you postpone operational deployment of the expensive and untested NMD system and transfer the associated funding to accelerated programs to secure the multitude of facilities containing nuclear weapons and materials and to protect our ports and borders against terrorists who may attempt to smuggle weapons of mass destruction into the United States.

Yet Washington is plunging ahead, wasting tens of billions of dollars, while the real threat looms ominously. And our own Canadian military-industrial establishment is enthusiastically proclaiming "us too please!" Jeffrey Simpson writes:

Scared? You should be. A crazy, uncertain, dangerous world lurks out there. Pakistan's nuclear chief sells secrets to North Korea, Iran and Libya, only to receive a pardon from Pakistan's dictator-cum-president, thereby furthering Pakistan's reputation as the world's most dangerous country.*

The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace says:

In case after case, U.S. intelligence has uncovered proliferation, but other priorities took precedence. The clearest case was in the 1980s, when the United States ignored Pakistan's acquisition of nuclear capabilities because it needed Islamabad's help to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan. History is repeating itself, now that Pakistan is America's "ally" in the war on terror.†

Note that Pakistan now has between thirty and fifty nuclear weapons, then read Jeffrey Simpson above once more.

Meanwhile, in Washington, D.C., on March 30, Richard Clarke said that since 1999, both the Canadian Security and Intelligence Service and the RCMP have been "bending over backwards to be helpful to the U.S."** But he also indicated that the U.S. invasion of Iraq has radicalized Muslim youth "into heightened hatred of America," and given al-Qaeda an unprecedented recruitment opportunity. And of course this was before the photographs and details of the horrendous American treatment of prisoners in Iraq were revealed.

* *Globe & Mail*, Feb. 7, 2004.

† *Key Proliferation Questions*, Vol.7/No.6, Mar., 24 2004.

** *Globe & Mail*, Mar. 31, 2004

**From *Rushing to Armageddon* by Mel Hurtig.
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From: PIECES FOR SMALL ORCHESTRA by Norman Lock

1.

The General is happy. He is playing hopscotch on the tiled floor with his own shadow! The tiles are black and white and perfect in the way of tiles. The shadows of his high boots stretch and break like Turkish Taffy each time he reaches the apogee of his hopping, which is nothing laughable – no, not for one who was wounded long ago beneath the walls of Bór. The General is in love with the hat-check girl (as am I, who lacks the General's magnificent mustache and savoir faire). It is the insouciance that belongs to love alone that accounts for it – this hopscotching by the banquette ("like a young man in the cavalry"). The General has an assignation, later, in the Mediterranean Room, when she has finished for the night. Until then, she promises to keep his sword safe among the hats. The General has given her a bag of sweets. She is young enough to be swayed by sweets, to be seduced by certain flavors. (Their identity she keeps secret from him, else she will be at his mercy!) All but invisible, she stands among the coats, smelling the night air on them. We are inside and happy to be so! Even the General, whose sword is merely ornamental now that he has been smitten by love. Possessed of an elastic heart, I go in search of the cigarette girl. The palm leaves sway in the artificial breeze. The leisurely palm in its fat bronze pot! The orchestra, though small, has so far played from a repertory whose variety we have no right to expect in this provincial hotel. The General's sword breathes in the dark of the coatroom, waiting for the heroic action to come. (The flavors are mango and melon.)

2.

The Prime Minister is in the vestibule, brushing his silk hat with his sleeve. He comes each night after the cares of state have been put away. He lays them in a drawer among maps and pairs of immaculate white gloves. To be here with us requires finesse; for the nation believes he is lucubrating, not waltzing – certainly not doing the two-step or tango with a rustling girl in his arms! A girl in a pale-yellow dress whose frou frou causes desire to rise up in his thinnest ducts. He left the ministry by the back stairs, eluded the stiffly standing military guard, tiptoed past the alleys where, since nightfall, men and women have come in search of contraband. Each night he slides a stack of crimson inflationary currency over the sill of the wire wicket, behind which a woman sits who hands him, in return, a loop of blue tickets. Always it is the same girl with whom he dances – the one in the yellow dress, which makes a crepuscular music, she whose hair is the color of certain sunsets. Her name tonight is Lydia. (It might as easily have been Vlotka or Suzette or even just plain Sue.) It is for this the Prime Minister lives – not for his wife or his countrymen, who pity him over their beer and sausages for his ceaseless devotion. I lift my glass to him as he passes near my table, but his mind is elsewhere – on a diagram of the samba he is now dancing, studied intently an hour ago (a map of movement through a space hostile to gracelessness). I know what is in his mind, for inside the hotel I have the gift of omniscience. (Do not ask who gave me it. I don't know, unless it is the bottle of clearest gin, the mermaid on the swizzle stick, or the strength of my own desire.)

3.

The Municipal Engineer drinks too much. How else is he to discover a new planet – never mind the lineaments of a universe until now unrevealed to the mind of man? It is there, on the tip of his tongue, just as it must have been for Ptolemy, Kepler, Tycho Brahe. More chalk, he says to the waiter, who brings him a stick from behind the bar. Blue, he says; and the waiter obliges with a dimpled cube from the billiard room. The Municipal Engineer, whose imagination was seized by the Palace of Running Water in Buenos Aires at an impressionable age, is on the threshold of

discovery. We are glad for him! We, too, are interested in matters outside the ordinary, now that the ordinary is past enduring. We are glad for you, Mr. Engineer! we shout. He pretends not to be affected by our adulation as he bends over the table and composes the universe in blue chalk. We hope that it will be a happier one than the one we left outside the hotel, hostile and indifferent to art. Moved by a rare sympathy, the Prime Minister offers him one of his dance tickets so that he may enter a rhapsodic phase with a pretty girl in his arms; but he declines (with what regret we cannot say), choosing, instead, the selfless rigors of creation. (I assure you, I would not have resisted – no, not for an instant, now that the entire orchestra is awake!)

4.

Some want to hide. Do whatever makes you happy! we tell them (we, who are also, each in his own way, in hiding). There are closets and passages in which one may conceal oneself; beds in the rooms upstairs, under which one may “lay low” for a while in perfect comfort. Some prefer to stand by the hour behind the heavy damask draperies. We take them beer and sandwiches and news of the orchestra: how the bassoonist’s sore throat is progressing, whether or not the piccolo player has found her embouchure. For all are interested in the condition of the orchestra. Without it, the life of the hotel would cease and boredom – who knows? – drive us out into the streets again (patrolled by armor-plated machines). And should we be bereft of essential services? We have provisioned ourselves with candles; boxes of government pamphlets wait to be burned; the storerooms are amply provided with tinned sardines, peaches, and baby peas; and – fortunately! – the wine cellar seems, in its apparently infinite recession into the darkness, a sign of God’s own largesse. The General, having renounced Clausewitz in favor of the caresses of our women (and who now would rather a polka than a Sousa march) – he has assessed the situation. The situation, he assures us, pulling magisterially on his moustache – the situation is brilliant; we have nothing, he insists, to fear; we can survive a siege until we are relieved by those friendly to love. And should they be delayed, we ask? The General shrugs and says, For the better part of our lives. And it is the better part that ought to concern us – the remnant suitable only for the grave. We are cheered, for we are still young and have not exhausted the pleasures of peace. I divest the cigarette girl of her tray; and together we ride the elevator to the roof, there to share a chocolate bar and exchange our astrological signs – mine, the Ram, hers, the Fish.

5.

The partisans have taken the moon. This news, from the Journalist, who joined me at the bar for a gin and tonic. I was about to reply that they are welcome to it, for surely there are other moons: Io and Europa, for instance. But his crestfallen look silences me. You are a romantic, I say (pleased to find tenderness in a war correspondent). He looks fondly at the colorful bottles ranged behind the bar. Even Hemingway adored it, he says. The Spanish moon, the Cuban. Ours is being held in a trolley barn at the end of the street. I don’t think it minds, he says. It must be tiresome, I reply, to be always revolving. The Journalist opens his typewriter and begins to write his story, having assured me of his objectivity. I leave him to it and take the elevator to the rooftop lounge in order to confirm with my own eyes the truth: the sky is black, there, where last night the moon shone full. What, I wonder, are their intentions toward it, the partisans? Do they mean to ransom it, perhaps; but who is there now, among the enemies of poetry and celestial mechanics, who would pay to have the moon resume its rightful place? The times are bleak, the era inhumane, the age iron and dark. I return to the ballroom and watch a while the dancers compose intricate patterns on the parquet. I go into the Mediterranean Room and see, under a tromp l’oeil moon framed by an ornate trellis, the General and the hatcheck girl embracing in the painted light.

6.

The Fireman is unhappy. They confiscated his engine and also his fire axe. How am I to be a fireman without apparatus? he asks. We have no answer. We give him a drink instead, so that he will know we are men and women of compassion. Our best single-malt Scotch whose smoky

taste we think will please him. It does; he drinks half the bottle. We withhold censure, knowing his desolation. We, too, have plumbed it, each after his own fashion. Each has tasted the bitter herbs. Drink, we say, and then sleep. We have a room prepared for him on the topmost floor so that he may look out upon the fires, which are raging here and there within the city. Having put him to bed, we confer among ourselves how best to solace him. It would be well to have a fireman, says the Prime Minister. One can no longer depend upon the infrastructure for essential services, now that civil war has ripped the social contract to shreds. Fireman are colorful, says the Civil Engineer, who is not (except for traces of blue chalk on his sleeves). Not so colorful as Generals! asserts the General, who insists on precedence. He shows us his clocked socks. We go up and wait for the Fireman to wake. Inevitably, he does. This isn't the firehouse! he cries, bewildered. No, a hotel, and we wish to offer you the job of fireman. We show him the apparatus: the coiled hoses, the "fire bottles," the shiny axes under glass. Proudly, we point to the sprinkler heads and the smoke alarms. But where is the pole? he asks. We are embarrassed and shuffle our feet, not knowing what to say. He shakes his head dejectedly. A fireman without a pole is a sad sort of fireman. But we have other things, we tell him: cocktails and lobster bisque, chambermaids and a sauna. And imagine – our own movie theatre! Chambermaids? he asks, clearly intrigued. Yes, and Cuban cigars. There is also an orchestra which, though small and not always awake, plays with real fire. With fire you say? Figuratively so. And the chambermaids are pretty? We have dreamed them to be beautiful and fluent in Romance languages. We have conceived everything to our complete satisfaction. All that we lacked was a fireman, an absence which we did not realize until now. Thank you, thank you for coming to our hotel! Am I then the only hotel fireman? You are solely it, we say, sensing victory. And if I am too tired to wake in answer to the fire alarm? You may, if you like, battle the blaze in your sleep. The musicians sometimes play in theirs. I would like, he says, a cigar, a shave, and a red-haired chambermaid. You have only to wish it, for the secret ductwork of fulfillment to function sweetly. I want happiness, he says, his eyes misting. Happiness will be yours! We promise. In our hotel, happiness is granted without reservation.

7.

We don't need a stuffed rabbit, we tell him – not even a galvanized one. The Taxidermist persists, though we turn our backs on him. I have species that no longer exist on earth, he says. We have a collection of mechanical animals, which amuses us, we answer him – anger flashing at the edge of our voices, because of our wish to be dancing, now that the orchestra is playing with unusual brilliance. Later, at the bar, after the orchestra has fallen asleep, we speak to him more civilly, cheered, perhaps, by the twinkling siphon bottles. What we don't have is a river. The Hydrologist, mopping his perspiring face with a bar towel, asserts: I am fabricating for you a river that will rival any in the real world – including the Amazon and the Nile. Indignant, the General quizzes him, thus: What do you mean by "real"? That which is outside, the Hydrologist replies – outside the hotel and which no longer concerns us. Ah! The instrumentalists wake: they were merely marshalling their orchestral forces. The General resumes the samba, which he performs with aplomb, to the accompaniment of his spurs. (He was in the cavalry!) What about fish? asks the Taxidermist, fear visible in his eyes as we are once more drawn to the dance floor. I have some remarkable examples of late 20th century fish, in attitudes that will remind you of harem girls. They are – I assure you – waterproof; and with this cunning motor (he takes from his pocket a stuffed mouse and, unscrewing its head, shows us a tiny device), I can make them move! The Hydrologist is delighted. An improvement over your wind-up model, he informs me with a disdain that makes me want to beat him. I agree, agrees the Building Inspector, who has, within his jurisdiction, all things mechanical, including fish. The General despises technology, preferring his antique sword to a howitzer. Wind-up fish are absolutely charming! he says, kissing the hat-check girl on the nape of her neck. Charming! she giggles. O, go to bed! the Prime Minister screams; and they do – at once. Welcome, the P.M. says, to our hotel! The Taxidermist

bows. I look forward to seeing the happy results of your collaboration with the Hydrologist. The Hydrologist offers him his arm, and they begin to dance the polka.

8.

The Building Inspector reports that the hotel's foundation is unsound. Unsound! we scoff Illusory, he declares, smacking his lips. In fact, it can be said to exist in imagination only – in the wish that it be. There are no load-bearing walls, only cleverly painted screens that shift from day to day. I suspect the building is supported by the orchestra alone, by its playing or in its sleep – who knows? I dream of foundations, the General says, stroking his iron mustache. Foundation garments! Old roué! we laugh, having long before now accepted his lasciviousness – inevitable in a General of cavalry, as is his swagger stick. (In his youth, he luxuriated on damascene pillows in the Kasbah.) We love you, General! we cry, momentarily overcome by bonhomie. Beaming, he goes off in search of the hat-check girl, whom he adores. We resume our discussion of the foundation. Only this morning I went to the cellar for a bottle of Gordon's Gin, I tell them. While I did not, I admit, touch them, the walls looked to me to be substantial. The Hydrologist and the Taxidermist (who are inseparable) speak next as one: We can attest to bedrock. The progress of our river construction has been slowed because of it. The Anthropologist concurs: I have discovered the fossilized record of an ancient settlement on the riverbed. I am writing a monograph, which, I have no doubt, will assure my fame. The Building Inspector, who is after all a realist, snickers: You are, all of you, living in a dream world! (We do not dispute this. But whose?) You share a common delusion. But you must know that even a building that does not exist can collapse, if it ignores the principles of construction. Or catch fire, the Fireman remarks, if not built strictly to code. I suggest I make a thorough study and report back to you next year, the Building Inspector concludes. Or the year after, we say, with a magnanimous gesture of our seigniorial hand (the one we keep for occasions just such as this, for ours is a world of pomp and circumstance). Upstairs, the General and the Hat-Check Girl embrace on the ceiling. Applauding, we commission the Hotel Photographer to record the moment "with all his art," for love soon spends itself no matter how we will it otherwise.

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THE WELL-MANNERED THIEF

by Oswald Kittery

After his parents died, Hiro took over the thundering tofu home-business and instantly it burst into flames. He had been unable to parlay his rust-removing skills into tofu-making success during the three interim days between their deaths and his own economic disaster. On that third day, he stood amidst the fiery ruins of a spectacular failure. Even his medicine had been melted in its case by the sink. He had nothing left, except mice and last memories, both clasped to himself.

Hiro's final purchase before the fire had been a glittering ring, a ring of longing. After the tofu inferno, however, his treasure was nowhere to be found. The last remnants of the sunlit medication eddied and receded from his bloodstream; Hiro's fog wrapped about him again--and he saw instantly that she had taken it.

Though he had never mentioned it to anyone, there was no doubt that the untrustworthy neighbour-woman next door had bewitched his beloved into her house. He could hear it calling him. He went to it directly.

The blue gem set in yellow had reflected all light in Heaven it had seemed. Of earthly wonders that snare the soul, surely none can dispute how unbearably beautiful plastic can be. Hiro had spent two days' earnings to own such a beauty. It took much negotiation to persuade the curbside gemologist to part with it. In the end, Hiro must have charmed the cart jeweller's defences away: the reluctant beauty was his. To this shining ring Hiro had transposed all the medicated joys and blurred bumps of a stunted, infinite childhood. To find his ring would be to recover the life he had lost.

Hiro had been raised in a good family. He knew to bow to elders lower than they bowed back, to take his shoes off at the front door before the little entry-way step-up, to kneel like a jack-knife, and to pound soy beans very, very hard. Hiro's special job in the good family business had been to find the rust spots--locate and eradicate--all evidence of grime; for thirty years no dirt in their home-kitchen "factory" had escaped him. The father had said little, but he had always ruffled Hiro's hair and let him choose a flower from the back garden for his pocket.

Though the rust-bits had quaked in Hiro-terror, not so the well-fed mice who adored him. Cleansed vermin-free tofu factories are mandatory, as reputation is everything. One mouse rumour guarantees extended loss. Their tofu-kitchen had held the new poisonous peanut butter-flavoured glue strips that stuck rodents to paper, where they slowly starved to death. Hiro had dumped rust scrapings onto the strips, just as he used to accidentally kick pebbles into the old metal snapping traps. The grey mice had trailed him ecstatically throughout each day. The father's myopia had grown worse. Life had been good.

Hiro now went straight up the stairs of the next-door neighbour's house that he found on the other side of town. He knew his beauty was under a futon in the closet. Futons live in closets during the day and are just the place to store missing jewellery. How foolish she was to have picked such an obvious place. He blinked disbelief and rummaged in blankets.

He didn't hate her; he just wanted his ring back. A well brought up thief would return a ring that did not belong to her. But not this one; this one had kept it. She couldn't wear it or she would have been caught. It had to be here in her house. There was simply nowhere else to put it. Hiro stiffened as he heard her footsteps re-enter the house and pause at the bottom of the stairs; he heard a child's voice entreated from the garden, and more footsteps away. He exhaled and rummaged faster.

If he was caught, accused, and his innocence unheard, he could always apologise. He remembered a man who had killed a bosozoku, a type of moped-riding gang member that blasted along sleeping streets. The grey man had gone into the street pre-dawn, lulled by silencer-free mopeds and knocked a boy off his bike with a two by four plank; the boy died instantly. The man apologised to police who did not charge him. In truth, they understood; there were bosozoku in their neighbourhoods too. Furthermore, the old man had apologised--with remorse.

Hiro reasoned his ring search was hardly as serious as murder, or even murder for such an honourable and defensible reason as this. He could say he was sorry, and the police would free him to return to his still-smoking tofu remains. (The neighbour called the child back from the stairs to her unfinished garden chores.) But no, he concluded, he would not, could not apologise.

It was his ring (that he hadn't found) he would insist. The next-door neighbour should apologise to him! Look at her guilt--sneaking her house around on the other side of town. He was rightfully regaining his own ring, and with it, the remains of his heart.

But no such devices would be necessary. Hiro's fumblings rewarded him. There, snoozing in a blanket corner was his beauty, and more radiant than ever. The stone was white, the band had become heavy with exiled sorrow, but a soft golden heat revealed its identity.

Beneath Hiro rose cries of bowing cavalry at the door. Their socks threatened the stairs. He laid a pale pocket flower in the blanket's hollow, flickered out along the roof tiles and, treasure in mouth, thudded to earth. He strode gloriously back to his tofu coals and his mice.

The lady in question called the police when she realised there was an intruder. She found one extra pair of shoes at the front door and knew at once, knew with all certainty, that a well-mannered thief had entered her home.

IN THE PORCHYARDS OF THE VOID

by Richard Truhlar

1.

It's best to look away or close your eyes when it happens, but this is not always possible. You're like the first man who saw the first photograph, constrained from then on to a continuous voracity for the image, a hunger in you to know the madness which keeps threatening to explode in the face of whoever looks at it.

I do no harm. I'm heavy, motionless, stubborn yet polite... I suffer from a sensation of inauthenticity, sensing that I've been somehow parenthetically placed within myself. Yet I can sit and read for hours on end, which relieves me, absents me, carries me away to somewhere I can forget that perhaps I'm imagined.

The first time it happened? I can't remember the first time, but have a vague sense that I was somewhere being observed without knowing it, as if someone were taking a candid photo of me while I was intent on reading the titles of used books in a shop front window. It can happen that I'm observed without knowing it. I myself am an unknown observer at times. Often on a streetcar, I'll inspect those around me while their eyes are averted, while they are reading books or newspapers, are gazing at passers-by out on the street. Sometimes I'll study the back of a person's neck seated in front of me, perhaps a woman's neck, trying to determine the quality of the skin just below the hairline, and if that quality continues below the collar line. What would it feel like to touch the nape of that neck? Would the hairline feel silky or coarse, the skin smooth or rough? But what of the person's face, is it handsome or homely...?

The photograph sets only when the observed opens his or her mouth and speaks. It's then one derives existence from the onlooker, as if language oriented vision.

"Step forward a little so we can see you." and awkwardly do so, managing an unnatural pose, subverting the primal flow of space and time to just stand there and stare at the lens which is staring back. Everything solid between the photographer and myself dissolves, and I remember that time in the hotel room, standing before the bathroom washbasin, wall-to-wall mirrors on both sides of me, my reflection duplicated to a vanishing point, a sudden sensation of nothing tangible to touch, a cloning of images repeated infinitely, and if you kept running towards the one image you felt to be of substance, you would never reach it. Two mirrors facing each other with nothing between, this is how I feel facing the photographer.

He was a pleasant man, unassuming, but dictatorial about his craft. In his eyes I knew I was a stubborn one, uncomfortable, posing inadequately, somehow always out of focus, and he needing to rearrange me continually... "Step forward a bit so we can see you." and eventually I take my place, make a face into the product of a society and its history, and he smiles, "Good, hold that pose."

I suffer from a sensation of inauthenticity, yet my image will be generated - I'll be a photographic memory, my private life unknown, a verb which has no infinitive. I do no harm, but I do repeat myself, always feeling that emphasis is a power of cohesion, and perhaps if I repeat myself often enough, I'll cohere to myself.

2.

Where I work we have protocol and policy, an art of securing oneself against harm. I sit at my desk, a client sitting across from me. He has a need, wants to know what he can have. I tell him what he can have. What he can have he can not obtain from me. He can have my protocol and policy, but he can not have me. I'm protected against his need. I'll not say anything which will deny him, which will give myself away. He'll discover that there are limits to what he can have. His desire is reflected back to him within limits; any excess in my eyes would disturb the scene. He'll stop talking for a moment, assess his position, take another route, yet soon realize he's travelling toward the same destination. It's as if he's standing between two mirrors, naked and embarrassed, staring down at his limp penis and wondering whether or not to take it in hand.

The noise of time is not sad, because it can never be heard. My client perceives that I'm not sad, suddenly feels that I've other things to attend to, and in that moment I see myself seated at my desk looking at me with a smile on my face... "Well, that's all I can do for you.", my mouth moving, still smiling, a certain restlessness in the gestures of my hands which are toying with a paperclip. I am diplomatic, polite, well-dressed but not conservatively. I make another gesture as if to stress that's

truly all that can be done. I watch myself shift in my chair signalling that my body needs to move, be about other things, watch the momentary flicker of annoyance pass over my face as the telephone rings and I'm commanded to pick up the receiver. "Excuse me for a moment, will you?", and seeing myself change into reception mode, talking slowly into the phone, aware of my client's eyes watching me, myself seeing myself as slightly distant from him but aware of his presence. My speaking contains information not necessary to speak since it's already understood by the caller, but necessary for my client who is watching me as I'm watching myself build the image of one who knows what he's talking about, one who has the situation under control, and is democratic in his reiteration of protocol and policy.

When my client has left, the assessment begins. Watching myself closely, I try to determine if I've inherited anything from an eye other than my own, try to discover if another person has written me into my biography. Will it be said that I was diplomatic, polite and well-dressed (but not conservatively)? The noise of time is silent now as I'm left to reflect and reflect as in two mirrors facing each other.

3.

Stepping on to the sidewalk from the office building, my head explodes; bits and slabs of skull, flesh and grey-matter flying off in all directions, splattering the fire hydrant and parked cars. No... my head hasn't exploded, stumbling slightly, my hand gripping on to the edge of a mail-box nearby, the vision leaving me momentarily blind.

Struggling to see something outside of myself, the pain banging away inside my head like a shovel against a steel wall. Slowly objects begin to reflect back light, objects seeming to act by themselves, complicated objects streaming by in various directions, intent on reaching their destinations. Looking at these objects, all I can see is myself, myself multiplied in what seems to be objects oblivious to my existence. They jostle me, knock into me. I take refuge between two tightly parked cars where the objects do not go, try to think, but my thoughts are confused... all I can see is myself when I look at one of them. Where have all the people gone...?

4.

Finding myself sitting in a smoky bar, objects moving back and forth with regularity... "Can I get you something?", I look up, am gazing into my own face... "Sure," I say to myself and order a dry vodka martini neat.

Looking around, the image of myself in the next booth is complacent, waiting patiently for my bar order. "What did you order?", I ask myself. "A dry vodka martini.", I reply. I do no harm, am polite, and looking up again... "A dry vodka martini, right?", placing the glass delicately down in front of me. "Thanks", I say to myself, take a sip, settle back into the leather upholstery of the booth and think: it's best to look away or close your eyes when it happens.

5.

The noise of time is not sad, the sentence repeating itself in my mind when I awoke in the driver's seat of the car. Had I passed out? Don't remember driving here. Where? Looking out into nothing but darkness... slowly opening the door to be somewhere... stepping out and the crunch of gravel under foot... standing on a road in somewhere, a road coming from somewhere and going to somewhere and being right here in somewhere. Don't remember driving here... can't see any buildings, any trees, just expanse, flat black expanse, stretching from somewhere, stretching to somewhere.

Well, that's all I can do for you, says the expanse, and remembering his reflection coming back to him from his client's eyes, watching himself go through the motions, watching HIMSELF?...

Like a newsreel moving across the screen of my mind, he sees himself, as a child, pick up a rock, a perfectly circular rock, an orb from a riverbed, a planet of perfection, and he heaves it on to another rock, it splitting and breaking apart before him, the crystals hidden in his eyes leaping into reality, quartz within orb, fingers reaching for each other across an expanse within circular confinement. It was his best find yet, a mineral translucence to equal his mind. Quartz within orb, clarity within mind. Little boys are not frightened of the see-through...

The car moved effortlessly through the night, coming from somewhere and going to somewhere, and he looked at himself in the rearview mirror, no reflection, he wasn't there... the noise of time rustled, and no reflection... he couldn't see himself, but he heard someone moving behind him... "Step forward a little so we can see you"... FLASH.

A MATTER OF FORM: A REVIEW of bpNichol's *KonfessionS of an ElizAbeThan Fan Dancer* Edited and with an introduction and notes by Nelson Ball. (Coach House Books, \$17.95)

review by derek beaulieu

To begin with a little genealogy of this text; *KonfessionS of an ElizAbeThan Fan Dancer* (note the capitalization) was first published in January 1967 through Bob Cobbing's writers forum quartos, with a second edition coming from the same press in August 1969. Five years later, in 1974 (although the book is dated 1973), the revised Canadian edition was published by Nelson Ball's Weed Flower Press. The editions were not identical, with 5 poems removed and 5 poems added for the Canadian edition.

This new edition of *Konfessions of an Elizabethan Fan Dancer* (note the capitalization) from Coach House Books follows the manuscript order of the 1973(1974) edition — with the excised poems from the 1967 edition appended at the end of book — along with valuable end matter, bibliographical work and a new introduction from Nelson Ball.

The Coach House version of *Konfessions of an Elizabethan Fan Dancer* returns a collection of poetry to print which is a vital section of bpNichol's oeuvre; his typewriter concrete (not to mention the inclusion of some of Nichol's more well-known visual poems like "Cycle #22", "Blues" and "Easter Pome"). While Nichol continued to write concrete and visual poetry through-out his career, after *Konfessions* the amount of typewritten concrete was eclipsed by hand drawn, lettered, and letraset work, not to mention his longer lyric work *The Martyrology*. *Konfessions* represents an interesting aspect of Nichol's oeuvre in as much as it is much closer in style to Henri Chopin, Pierre Garnier and Cavan McCarthy's typewritten-driven work than his other work.

Being that this is a re-release of a book almost 40 years old, I am more interested in discussing the book and the design as opposed to the poetry contained within the book. What I find quite intriguing about this edition is some of the decisions that Nelson Ball and designer damian lopes have made concerning its presentation. Much of the design is extremely sensitive and thoughtful. This text is dependant on a fixed-space typeface (that is, a typeface where every letter takes up the same amount of horizontal space on a line), and lopes has thoughtfully re-typeset the entire manuscript in Caecilia PMN creating a wonderfully clean and sharp finished text. The fixed-space typeface is necessary for the success of many of these poems, for example "Cycle #5" (24):

```
sailboat
  boat sail
    sailboat sale
      sale boat sail
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(note that in this review, I have used Courier New as a fixed-space font, which certainly lacks the elegance of Caecilia, but will have to do here...). The grid structure of "Cycle #5," like many of the poems in *Konfessions of an Elizabethan Fan Dancer*, is dependant on the fixed space between letters to create a verticality / acrostic style which foregrounds a sort of visual rhyme. In my opinion, these typewriter-based poems owe a great deal to Olson's theorizing of the typewriter as a precise instrument for writing:

It is the advantage of the typewriter that, due its rigidity and its space precisions, it can, for a poet, indicate exactly the breath, the pauses, the suspensions even of syllables, the juxtapositions even of parts of phrases, which he intends. For the first time the poet has the stave and the bar a musician has had. (“Projective Verse” 245)

Additionally, the cover has a few little nods of irony in its imagery. The cover image consists of an old Underwood typewriter with a page in progress. The ironic thing is that the text on the go could not have been produced on the typewriter — a nod to the work involved in re-typesetting this manuscript into new technology perhaps? There’s also a wonderful little visual pun on the spine where the Coach House pressmark has been placed directly over the ‘8’ key — obscuring the number eight (Nichol’s favorite letter was ‘H’, the *eighth* letter of the alphabet) with the Coach House pressmark, underlining Nichol’s role at the Coach House, and that press’ dedication to keeping a large portion of his work in print both on paper and online. A nice touch.

What i find a little more perplexing is the size of the published book. The book is perfect-bound 8”x10”, the same size as the original writers forum quartos edition. I think this would be a fine idea if the book fore-grounded the 1967 edition. Instead what we have is primarily the 1973(1974) edition — which was originally published at 8 ½” x 11” — published in the format of the 1967 edition, a rather confusing decision in my mind. Both the writer forum quartos and Weed/Flower editions were mimeograph printed and reflect that technology’s page size. With computer typesetting what it is today, I don’t understand why the Coach House edition was made to mimic the limitations of an outdated technology.

Few of the poems of *Konfessions of an Elizabethan Fan Dancer* are dependant on a certain page size, and its my opinion that publishing this text 8”x10” gives it an undeserved ephemeral quality. For the most part, the poems of *Konfessions of an Elizabethan Fan Dancer* are short, concise poems (which Nichol at one point categorized as “ideopoems”) seeming to me, to be more grounded in a haiku-like concision than in an awareness of page-size and the political uses of white-space, for example “Popular Song” (40):

warbled
WARbled
warBLED
warbled

I am not arguing for a uniformity of design for all books of poetry, or even for all of Nichol’s oeuvre by any means. There is a literary / political statement made by having books released in varying sizes, and Nichol’s work makes that explicit. Despite the political issues in challenging the book-form by working in variant styles and publishing formats, i remain unsure of the decisions behind the page size of this edition of *Konfessions*. Coach House’ publication of *Konfessions of an Elizabethan Fan Dancer* returns a seminal Nichol text to print. Ball and lopes have presented simultaneously both an exciting and confusing design — but a design that never ceases to compliment and charge the text in a modern re-setting.

CONDENSED LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS TO ISSUES OF *RAMPIKE* FROM 1979 TO PRESENT:

Vol. 1 # 1 (erosion issue) Dana Atchley, Doug Back, Ihor Holobitsky, Dennis Oppenheim, Terrence McCubbin, Ted Plantos, Mark Prent, Villem Teder, George Whiteside, & others.

Vol. 1 #'s 2 & 3 (wood/double issue) Clark Blaise, George Bowering, bill bissett, Stompin' Tom Connors, Frank Davey, Tom Dean, Eldon Garnet, Peter Gnass, Noel Harding, Stephen Hogbin, Steve Linn, Steve McCaffery, Opal Nations, Louise Nevelson, Dennis Oppenheim, Louis Stokes, Bill Vazan, & others.

Vol. 2 #'s 1 & 2 (electricity/double issue) Laurie Anderson, Germaine Beaulieu, Joseph Beuys, Clark Blaise, Jonathan Borovsky, George Bowering, Rosetta Brooks, Nicole Brossard, Frank Davey, Martin Esslin, Dave Godfrey, Robert Kroetsch, Rene Levesque, George Manupelli, Dave McFadden, John Meisel, Marshall McLuhan, David Rosenboom, Nash the Slash, Takis, France Theoret, Kerry Trengrove, & others.

Vol. 2 # 3 (violence issue) Vito Acconci, Joseph Beuys, Stuart Brisley, Chris Burden, Nicole Brossard, William Burroughs, Frank Davey, Chris Dewdney, Lucien Francoeur, John Kenneth Galbraith, Dave Godfrey, Pauline Harvey, Sid Marty, Steve McCaffery, Dave McFadden, Eric McLuhan, b.p. Nichol, Dennis Oppenheim, Michael Peel, Yolande Villemaire & others.

Vol. 3 # 1 (erotica issue) Vito Acconci, Hedi Bouraoui, George Bowering, Victor Coleman, Jean-Paul Daoust, Frank Davey, Michael Delisle, Paul Dutton, Lief Ericksson, Endre Farkas, Lucien Francoeur, Eldon Garnet, Noel Harding, Isabelle Larivee, Robert Mapplethorpe, David McFadden, b.p. Nichol, Al Purdy, Takis, Joel-Peter Witkin, Yehuda Yordan, & others.

Vol. 3 # 2 (dreams issue) Claude Beausoleil, Jonathan Borovsky, Nicole Brossard, John Brown, Chris Burden, William Burroughs, Jean-Paul Daoust, Frank Davey, Michael Delisle, Paul Dutton, Dave Godfrey, Komar & Melamid, Norval Morrisseau, b.p. Nichol, Dennis Oppenheim, Michael Peel, France Theoret, Yolande Villemaire, Michael Winkler, Robert Zend & others.

Vol. 3 # 3, Vol. 4 # 1 (institutions/double issue) Vito Acconci, Raphael Barret-Rivera, Charles Bernstein, Claudine Bertrand, bill bissett, George Bowering, Jean-Paul Curtay, Frank Davey, Jaques Derrida, Paul Dutton, Eugene Dubnov, Fast Wurmen, Lucien Francoeur, Michael Gay, John Giorno, Gary Shilling, Richard Kostelanetz, Marina La Palma, Steve McCaffery, David McFadden, Robert Morgan, Norval Morrisseau, Josef Skvorecky, Lars Vilks, Geoffrey Wonnacott, Robert Zend, Paul Zelevansky & others.

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